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ABSTRACT

This document details how Australia's government intends to implement the New National Agenda for Women, which was formulated in 1993 after a review of many recent reports and after a forum to obtain input from women in the community, representatives of many women's organizations, and all areas of government. Sixteen of the 23 chapters examine the following issues: women and decision making; eliminating violence against women; women and the media; education; training; employment; child care; sex discrimination; health and well-being; women and families; homes and communities; income security; superannuation; sport, recreation, arts, and culture; women and the environment; and international cooperation. Six chapters discuss government programs/policies toward the following groups: non-English-speaking women, young women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women in rural and remote areas, older women, and women with disabilities. Outlined in chapter 23 are processes being used to implement, monitor, and report progress in achieving the national agenda. Each chapter includes a statement of goals and lists of achievements thus far and planned actions. Appended are key information on commonwealth government departments and agencies and a list of organizations represented at the 1992 National Agenda for Women Renewal Forum. (MN)

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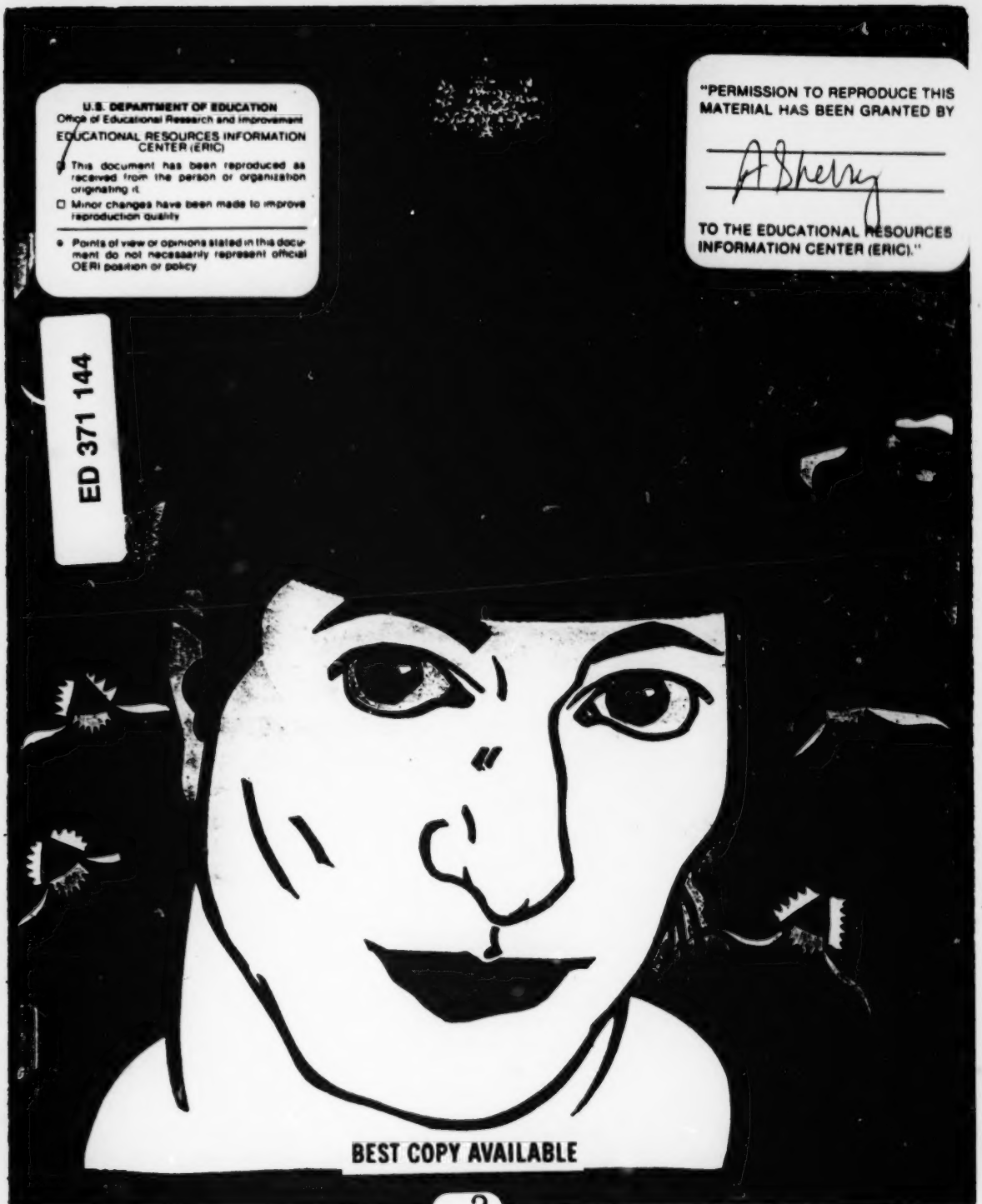

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WOMEN – Shaping and Sharing the Future

The New National Agenda for Women 1993 – 2000

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WOMEN — Shaping and Sharing the Future

The New National Agenda for Women 1993 - 2000

Second Edition June 1993

Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra

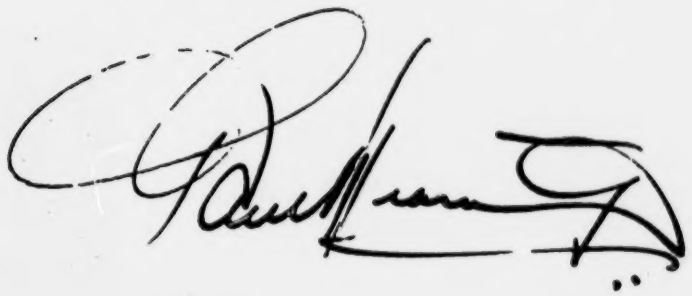
Photo: Garry Hanson, AUSPIC

The Prime Minister The Hon P. J. Keating MP with Senator the Hon Rosemary Crowley, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women.

The Prime Minister's Message to the Women of Australia

Australia is recognised around the world for our achievements in improving women's lives. My Government will continue to work with you to maintain and improve this record. This new National Agenda for Women spells out how we plan to do this. I welcome your comments on this important blueprint for bettering women's lives.

Women have always made major contributions to shaping Australia's past and present, and as Prime Minister I will ensure that this important partnership continues to shape the future.



P J Keating

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Introduction

Women in Australia in the 1990s

In September 1992 there were 8.8 million women and girls in Australia out of a total population of 17.6 million. By the year 2000, there will be about 10 million women and girls in Australia.

Women contribute in many ways to Australian society and to our economy.

Although every woman's life is different, we have many goals in common. Pursuing the life we want; having a real say in our lives; being well; being comfortable; being safe and unafraid; doing our fair share; getting a fair deal; and having a part in shaping the future of Australia.

So much of our lives has changed for the better. We want this progress to continue so that we can share our lives in harmony and in peace for our own sake and for our families and communities.

How Does the *New National Agenda for Women* Help Women?

This National Agenda enables the Government to have a strong role in co-operating with women to reach their goals. It spells out what the Government plans to do on a wide range of issues which affect women's everyday lives.

The Australian Government adopted the first National Agenda for Women in 1988. The first set of action plans took the National Agenda through to February 1993. The Government published information on progress every year in the Implementation Report. This New National Agenda for Women goes through to the year 2000.

In preparing the New National Agenda for Women, the Office of the Status of Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet consulted many women in the community, many representatives of women's organisations and all areas of Government. It also incorporated the findings from a wide range of recent reports. These included *Half Way to Equal*, the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Australian Women.

How is the National Agenda Set Out?

The Agenda has 23 chapters: 16 cover issues which are important to women, such as violence against women, and 6 cover groups of women with particular needs, such as women of non-English speaking background. Chapter 23 is on implementing the National Agenda.

The chapters are clustered in such a way that related issues are close to each other.

Each chapter has four parts:

A Statement of Women's Vision and Goals for the Future opens each chapter and reflects what many women say about the issue. The opening quotation reflects views expressed during consultations done in preparation of the National Agenda.

Achievements So Far is a column generally made up of statistics showing major changes for women over recent years.

Action for the Future comprises a set of strategies which the Commonwealth Government has endorsed.

Progress So Far is a brief history of each topic.

At the end of the National Agenda for Women there is a glossary of acronyms, a brief description of the functions of Commonwealth Departments and a list of non-Government organisations consulted in the development of the new Agenda.

How Will the National Agenda Be Used?

The Government will make extensive use of this National Agenda. Commonwealth Departments will incorporate strategies from the National Agenda with their annual work programs. If necessary, additional strategies will be developed to cover emerging issues. Each year

the Office of the Status of Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will continue to monitor and report on progress by Government Departments on the strategies in each chapter.

The Prime Minister is sending the National Agenda to all Premiers and Chief Ministers asking them to give attention to it.

In 1993-94, Australia's representatives will be questioned by the United Nations committee which monitors the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Agenda and Implementation Reports will be tabled as part of Australia's response.

Women in the community will use the National Agenda as a basis for raising, with Government, issues which need more attention.

Women and Decision Making 1

Achievements So Far

Between 1974 and 1992, **women Federal, State and Territory Parliamentarians** grew from 3.7 to 13.9 per cent.

In June 1992, **Federal Parliament** had 29 women representatives — 19 of the 76 Senators (25 per cent) and 10 of the 148 Members of the House of Representatives (6.8 per cent). Three of the 30 Ministers are women.

Of the eight **Premiers and Chief Ministers** in August 1992, three were women.

Women elected representatives in **local government** grew from 13 per cent to 20 per cent between 1986 and 1992. In August 1992, 102 councils were headed by women and a further 1328 other women were elected to Councils.

In 1987, a **Register of Women**, maintained in the Office of the Status of Women, was computerised to provide suggestions to Ministers of women to appoint to Government boards and committees.

'To share the future we need an equal share in making the decisions that affect our lives — decisions such as those made in Cabinet meetings, in many board meetings, executive meetings, committee meetings, club rooms and neighbourhood halls.'

We welcome the Government's commitment to achieve 50 per cent representation for women on Government Boards by the year 2000. We are pleased by the Government appointments of women to the board of the Commonwealth Bank, the Reserve Bank, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) and the Prices Surveillance Authority. We welcome Business Woman of the Year awards. We welcome that the ACTU has eight of its 38 executive positions filled by women. We welcome the anti-discrimination measures which work to ensure that we can no longer be excluded because we are women.

We welcome the increased effort the Government now puts into consulting women of all backgrounds on their particular needs.

From 1992, Commonwealth Departments are required to report the **appointment rate of women** to boards and committees in their annual reports.

The rate of women appointed to the **Senior Executive Service** of the Commonwealth Public Service rose from 4.4 per cent in December 1984 to 13.3 per cent in December 1991.

We want more opportunities to make our contributions to the decisions on important issues ... all decisions which affect our lives.

We believe many women have the experience and ability to be selected or elected to high level positions. Our perspectives and methods of working are often different from those of men. We believe that our expertise should be valued just as highly and we see leadership and management courses adopting these approaches.

Women are aiming to work with co-operation, power-sharing and consultation. We strive to avoid processes based on egotistical confrontation.

Many women have been working for years with each other in these ways and achieving fine results in those areas of our lives in which we have been able to have a significant say.

We want to work in the mainstream because we believe it will improve outcomes for all Australians.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Maintain effective consultative mechanisms and improve information networks to provide women in all areas of the community with opportunities to find out about or comment on policies or programs.
- Continue to strengthen mechanisms throughout parliamentary and government processes which allow for the widest range of consultations on a wide range of issues.
- Maintain the *Appoint* information system as a way of measuring progress in increasing the appointment rate of women and other equal opportunity target groups to Commonwealth boards and committees.

- Continue to require Departments to report in their annual reports on the rate of appointment of women to boards and committees.

- Encourage Ministers to set up systems to monitor forthcoming vacancies and seek out suitable women so that the Government's goal of 50 per cent representation of women on all boards and committees will be reached by the year 2000.

- Make the Office of the Status of Women's (OSW) Register of Women available to peak industry and private sector bodies to provide names of women for appointments. Privacy measures are to be implemented by OSW.

- Encourage peak private sector and union bodies to include at least one woman amongst the names put forward when asked to nominate people for possible appointment to boards, commissions and committees.

- Conduct a publicity campaign through OSW aimed at encouraging more women to nominate themselves for inclusion on its Register of Women, in particular younger, older, non-English speaking background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with disabilities.

- Develop training material through OSW to encourage an appreciation of the different qualities women bring to leadership and management.

- Widely publish statistics through the Affirmative Action Agency on employment rates of women in managerial positions in the private sector

- Ensure that the strategy being developed by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Public Service Commission for Access and Equity training, and the interim information seminars, give attention to women and the qualities they bring to management.

- Request that the National Women's Consultative Council update their *Women into Action* and *Political Awareness for Women Seminar* booklets and make them widely available to women interested in being elected to all levels of government, to union bodies, and to sporting and other organisations.

- Encourage public museums and institutions to include adequate depictions of women's place in Australian culture and history.

- Promote greater awareness of the Australian Honours system and encourage community, professional, private and public sector organisations to nominate women for Australian Honours.

Progress So Far

Consultative Mechanisms Involving Women

The Government has a firm policy of actively fostering women's involvement in decision making. Consultation with women in the Australian community takes place on a number of levels. The National Women's Consultative Council (NWCC) is the peak body for specific consultation with Australian women. This body, which was established in 1983, is the successor to the National Women's Advisory Council (NWAC) which was established in July 1978. Both bodies have conducted a wide range of consultations on issues including employment, education and training; violence against women; the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, rural women, women with disabilities, young and ageing women; child care; the environment; industrial relations, housing and many other matters and have made recommendations on these issues to Government. Both bodies have also maintained links with many other women's organisations. The other key consultative bodies include the National Committee on Violence Against Women, the National Non-English Speaking Background Women's Council, the National Working Party on the Portrayal of Women in the Media, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's Women's Committee, the Women's Employment, Education and Training Advisory Group and the Child Care Advisory Council.

An exciting feature of many of these bodies is that they are made up of State and Commonwealth public servants together with community members and, where appropriate, industry members. These bodies are characterised by their commitment to achieving positive outcomes for women. Because of this they are able to reach consensus on many difficult issues. They are able to produce outcomes such as the National Strategy on Violence Against Women; the National Strategy on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Health and the Advisory Notes on the Portrayal of Women in Advertising. They provide community members with a unique opportunity to gain insight into the workings of Government departments, public servants and industry members the opportunity to hear first hand from community members about the views and needs of women.

The Bilingual Consultants Network is a further example of the Government seeking the views of individuals within the community. This network, administered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, is available to all Government departments and the private sector wanting to consult people of non-English speaking background on issues and services.

Ministers and the Parliament also use a wide range of processes to consult women on issues and services. This includes the work of the Ombudsman and Parliamentary Inquiries.

The recent House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia is a

good example of wide and useful consultation by Members of Parliament. The Committee sent out some 1500 letters to persons and organisations inviting them to make submissions to the Inquiry; held 19 days of Public Hearings during which they received evidence from 181 witnesses; conducted a series of seminars based on the Terms of Reference and received 634 submissions. The findings of this Inquiry are being given serious attention by Government and responses are incorporated as strategies in this National Agenda.

Appointment of Women to Boards

The Government is committed to 50 per cent representation of women on Government boards and committees by 2000. Women have indicated their willingness to be appointed to Government boards and bodies by nominating themselves for inclusion on the Register of Women maintained by OSW and other Registers maintained by State Governments and other Commonwealth Departments. As part of placing responsibility on departments to improve their rate of appointments, OSW developed *Appoint*, an information management system. All Government departments have the *Appoint* system which helps them keep statistics on the numbers of women and members of other equal opportunity categories who have been appointed to boards and committees. *Appoint* also provides Government with total numbers of women appointed. Departments are now required to include these statistics in their annual reports.

To help increase the appointment rate of women to private sector boards, OSW is opening up the Register of Women to provide suggestions to peak bodies such as the Business Council of Australia. This will be implemented with full regard for privacy issues.

Women in Politics

Local government has emerged as the level of government benefiting most from the expertise of elected women. In August 1992 there were 102 councils headed by female mayors (1 in 8 or 12.27 per cent) and 1328 other women elected to councils. The election of women to other areas of government continues to be a slower process. As at June 1992 women comprised 25 per cent of Senators in Federal Parliament but only 6.8 per cent of Members of the House of Representatives. All major political parties have policies aimed at accelerating the election rate of women.

The National Women's Consultative Council has produced two kits, *Women into Action: Women and Lobbying for Change* and *Political Awareness for Women* Booklets. This material is used extensively to encourage political awareness and advocacy amongst women.

Members of the National Women's Consultative Council (1992), the primary body for consultation between women and the Federal Government. Clockwise from top left: Pauline Griffin, Val Buswell, Anna Schinella and Diana Gadd.

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Eliminating Violence Against Women 2

Achievements So Far

In 1990-91, the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments jointly provided money for:

- 263 **women's refuges** or shelters,
- 50 counselling services, and
- 61 services for young women.

Today, courts in all States and Territories can issue **orders to protect women** who fear a violent attack. Men on whom these orders are served may be directed to stay away from the woman, her home and workplace. The police can arrest if the order is not obeyed. Thousands of women seek protection through these orders.

In 1990, the **National Committee on Violence Against Women** (NCVAW) was established with funding of $1.35 million over three years to enable national consideration of legal, policy and program issues and to conduct community education work in relation to all forms of violence against women.

'All women have the right to live free from violence and the fear of violence. Violence against women is a violation of our human rights'

The horrific extent of violence against women in Australia is a matter of national importance. Everyone, everywhere should be intolerant of violence against women.

Individual men should be held responsible for their acts of violence. Women are not to blame. Violence against women will stop only when men decide to stop being violent.

Some people think that men's violence against women is often caused by things such as loss of control, stress, alcohol, poverty, jealousy — or that women deserve it or ask for it.

All sorts of women in all types of families, communities and workplaces experience violence.

But many people don't realise that women are at greater risk of violence in their homes than on the street, and are likely to know their attacker.

Men's violence against women is about power and control. Many men think they own women and that they have the right to control or dominate us by using violence.

No woman ever deserves such treatment. Women have a fundamental right to be safe.

Violence against women must be responded to as a crime. Every woman escaping violence should have police and legal protection which puts the safety of the woman first. Every woman escaping violence should be given the support and services she needs.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Continue to develop and provide, primarily through co-operation with State and Territory Governments, a comprehensive crisis response to all forms of violence against women which should include:

  - speedy access to courts;
  - emergency accommodation and information through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP);
  - information on a range of crisis and support services relevant to needs in culturally appropriate forms and translated into community languages;
  - access to accredited interpreters and the employment of bicultural/bilingual workers;
  - accident and emergency centre protocols and free medical treatment by trained staff, funded through Medicare;
  - confidential crisis/support services;
  - emergency financial relief through the Department of Social Security (DSS); and
  - sexual assault services.

- Continue to develop a comprehensive range of services to assist women escaping violence to achieve independence including:

  - priority access to safe, secure and affordable housing;
  - access to training and retraining programs to assist women to gain employment;
  - assistance with child care and income support to facilitate women's access to training and education programs; and
  - ongoing counselling, support and medical services.

- Encourage effective police action to secure arrest and detention of men who are violent to women.

- Ensure the enforcement of existing laws in the area of violence against women and ensure the offer of mediation only when the woman is able to make an informed choice to be involved.

- Encourage the responsibility and accountability of police and members of the legal profession to respond with the safety of victims of violence as their primary focus.

- Endorse the elimination of violence against women and children in families as a key objective of the International Year of the Family (in 1994).

- Facilitate access to legal services for women escaping violence.

- Develop specific strategies to address the emergency and resource concerns of women with different needs, i.e., in remote and isolated locations, women with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from a non-English speaking background, adult incest survivors and young and older women.

Legislation

- Encourage further reforms towards strong, consistent legislation in the area of violence against women.

- Ensure that any changes to the Family Law Act take into account the needs of women and children escaping violence.

- Continue working towards stricter, uniform firearms legislation, the establishment of a national register of gun owners and the banning of military style, semi-automatic weapons.

- Encourage reform aimed at eliminating abuse by serial sponsors of women immigrants.

Training

- Promote the training of key occupational groups, such as judges, magistrates, lawyers, police, doctors, health professionals and teachers and ensure that it includes an understanding of the effects of violence against women and knowledge of services available.

- Expand and strengthen training for service providers working in the area of violence against women.

- Ensure mediators are trained to understand the significance of the power imbalance created by violence against women.

The Media

- Promote non-violent standards on television by encouraging and monitoring compliance with the existing code of practice and new codes of practice developed under the Broadcasting Services Act relating to the portrayal in television programs of physical, sexual and psychological violence and ensure that the effectiveness of the code of practice is monitored.

- Ensure the further development and effective implementation of guidelines on classifications of print and video materials which deal with the portrayal of violence against women; material which condones or incites violence against women; material which shows women in degrading, demeaning sexual poses or images of women as sexual objects, and ban advertising of restricted magazines.

The Community

- Undertake educational campaigns which inform women who have been or are being subjected to violence of their legal and human rights and which encourage them to make use of appropriate crisis support and counselling services.

- Ensure that all education campaigns and information about support services are also directed to people of non-English speaking background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability, residents of rural and isolated areas.

- Ensure that all education campaigns and information about support services are directed to members of the legal profession, the police, doctors, nurses, health professionals and members of other occupational groups likely to come into contact with women escaping violence.

- Continue developing and disseminating educational materials and curricula for schools and provide teacher training and materials which promote ethical development in relation to violence emphasise the criminal nature of violence, and educate all teachers and students from preschool to year 12 to recognise violence in its range of forms, behaviour and origins, such as notions of superiority, competitiveness, unequal rights and intolerance of difference.

- Continue and strengthen community education programs, in community languages, which promote that violence against women is a crime and that people are responsible for their own violent behaviour, regardless of the circumstances.

Data Collection and Research

- Research, monitor and make publicly available annually the rates of arrest, charge, prosecution, recidivism and disposal of cases of physical and sexual violence against women.

- Encourage the establishment of a national data set for the collection of police and court statistics in relation to violence against women which includes ethnicity data.

- Encourage research which records the penalties imposed on perpetrators of violence against women as input to reviewing and amending legislation, including bail provisions, from the perspective that violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights and that the protection of women who are victims of violence should be the priority of the law.

Progress So Far

Violence against women is a matter of national importance. A wide range of Commonwealth and State/Territory Government programs assist women who are the victims of violence. Additionally every measure to improve the general situation of women helps to eliminate violence against them.

The National Strategy on Violence Against Women has been developed by the National Committee on Violence Against Women (NCVAW) to provide direction and impetus for future work to eliminate violence against women. The Strategy is comprehensive and is directed at Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

The Strategy has been referred by the Commonwealth-State Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women to their Ministerial colleagues. The Council of Australian Governments (COAGS) considered the Strategy at its inaugural meeting and referred it to Commonwealth, State and Territory jurisdictions for early and appropriate consideration.

Refuges and Housing

Violence against women was placed on the public agenda by the women's movement in Australia. The first women's refuge, Elsie, opened in Sydney in 1974, with volunteer workers. In 1975 Elsie received a one-off grant from the Commonwealth Community Health Program. Later that year, the Commonwealth Government identified women's refuges as a major priority for women and initiated a national refuge program for ten refuges. Today, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) provides funding for 374 services for women, 313 of which are for women with or without children escaping domestic violence and 61 of which are for single women. Over $50 million (joint Commonwealth-State funding) is spent nationally each year to support women's refuges.

The public housing policies of all States and Territories make provision, to varying degrees, for women who are homeless as a result of escaping from or leaving a violent partner.

Capital funding for crisis accommodation, including women's refuges, is provided by the Commonwealth under the Crisis Accommodation Program, while the great majority of public rental housing provided through priority allocation procedures to women escaping domestic violence, is funded or partly funded under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

Counselling

Most States and Territories operate counselling services for victims of domestic violence. In addition to SAAP-funded counselling services, the Commonwealth Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) provides funding for groups working on projects for women victims of violence. Some States and Territories also fund telephone counselling services for women subjected to violence.

Financial Support

The Child Support Scheme, administered by the Department of Social Security and the Australian Taxation Office and under which payment of child maintenance is enforced, takes into account the particular needs of women escaping a violent partner.

Women who leave a violent partner may be eligible for financial support from the Department of Social Security by way of payment of a Sole Parents Pension and additional Family Payments for their children.

Women who leave violent partners may also obtain employment and training assistance administered by relevant Commonwealth Departments and which have as their aim the encouragement of long-term financial independence.

Gun Control

There has recently been a great deal of concern expressed about the use of firearms, particularly in the context of violence against women. The Australian Police Ministers' Council, in November 1991, agreed on a number of resolutions relating to firearms reform, specifically in the context of violence against women.

States and Territories are at various stages of implementing these reforms which affect the issue of firearms licences to a person who has been subject to a protection order and require the suspension of firearms licences and seizure of firearms in the possession of a person against whom a protection order is issued.

Police

Police Forces in Australia have made significant progress in making police officers aware of the needs of women subjected to violence and further work in this area is ongoing.

Immigration and Violence Against Women

The Commonwealth Government introduced new provisions in the Migration Regulations to take into account the particular circumstances of applicants for permanent residence on spouse grounds where after application, the relationship has broken down and there has been domestic violence.

The purpose is to allow such applicants to continue to be eligible for permanent residence if the relationship on which the application was based is assessed as having been genuine in the first instance but now no longer continuing, and if the applicant is a proven victim of domestic violence.

Legal Reforms

All States and Territories now have legislation which provides for the issue of protection orders, which can be obtained by women subjected to or threatened with violence. The purpose of these orders is to ensure the safety of the applicant for the order.

These orders may usually be obtained quickly and drafted to fit the circumstances of the applicant (and her children if they are also at risk). Breach of these orders allows the police to arrest without warrant and charge the violent party with a criminal offence. These orders can usually be obtained in addition to any criminal charges which may arise out of the violence which led to the obtaining of an order.

In some States and Territories, police have the power to take out a protection order on behalf of a woman.

All States and Territories are at varying stages of implementing reforms which will allow a woman who obtains a protection order in a particular State or Territory to have that order enforced in another State or Territory. This reform extends protection for women who, for example, decide that it is necessary to move to another State or Territory in order to escape a violent partner.

Significant changes have been made to the sexual assault and rape laws throughout Australia. There are now limits on the extent to which a complainant in a rape trial may be questioned about her past sexual history. All States and Territories now have laws which prohibit the publication of particulars which may identify the complainant in a sexual assault case, and there have been changes to the law defining rape and consent.

Rape within marriage is now a crime in all States and Territories. The High Court of Australia has stated in a recent case that 'it is not the common law that a wife gave irrevocable consent to her husband and if that ever was the common law it is not the law now'.

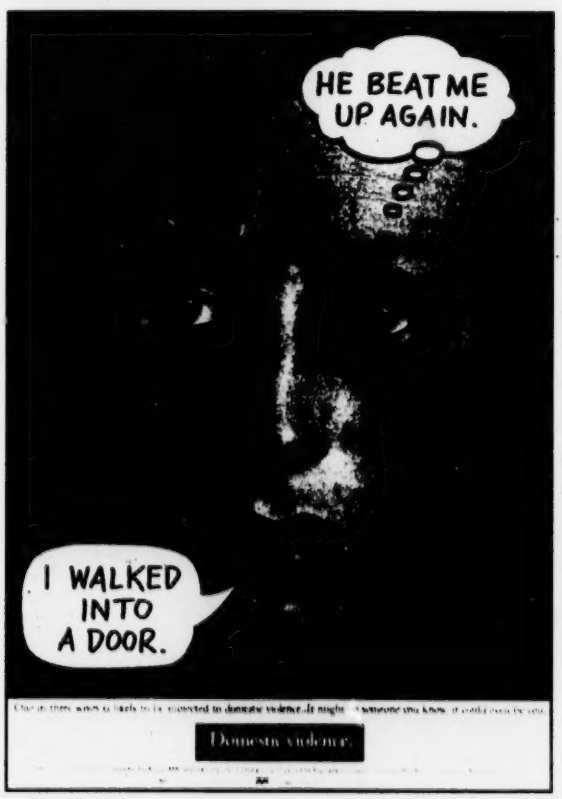
All States and Territories have legislation which prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace. Commonwealth sex discrimination legislation also addresses this issue.

There is ongoing work being undertaken to ensure that the Family Law Act is administered in a way which takes proper account of the safety needs of women and children escaping violence. Bodies such as the National Committee on Violence Against Women (NCVAW) have taken an active role in this sphere, producing publications which address matters such as the inappropriateness of mediation processes being used to resolve disputes between parties where there has been domestic violence.

Community Education

The Commonwealth Government made a major contribution to raising people's awareness of domestic violence through the National Domestic Violence Education Program (NDVEP) which ran over a three-year period to 30 June 1990. The Domestic Violence Awareness Month occurred in April 1989. This Program included television and other media advertising and the publication of materials about domestic violence. Community education has also been carried out by State and Territory Governments.

The Commonwealth Government has allocated $3.5 million over three years from 1992 for further community education work.



Part of the National Campaign Against Domestic Violence produced by the Office of the Status of Women.

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Achievements So Far

In 1992, women formed almost one-third of the **Parliamentary Press Gallery** and occupied more than half the Gallery radio positions.

In 1992, women commonly appeared as presenters and reporters in **current affairs and news programs.**

In 1992, representatives from the media industry, Government and community met regularly as the **National Working Party on the Portrayal of Women in the Media** to encourage understanding of this issue.

The ABC's coverage, over twelve weeks, of the 1991 **National Netball Super League** as the 'Goal Attack' program was a tremendous success. It put netball in the spotlight and laid the foundation for media recognition in Australia.

'We want fair and accurate portrayal which reflects our diversity.'

For women, there have been many improvements in the media. More women are presenters and reporters in news and current affairs. A greater variety of female characters appear in television drama and women are taking leading roles in Australia's rapidly growing comedy industry. Issues which are important to us are recognised more often by the print and electronic media. Advertising, especially on television, is more likely to portray men performing domestic tasks.

Nevertheless, sexist stereotyping of women still persists in journalism and in advertising. Women are often made to feel uncomfortable by images that are misleading, inaccurate or downright degrading. Women's organisations have expressed concern at the continued portrayal of women as sex objects, particularly in advertising, and the all-too-often sensationalist depiction of women as victims of sex crimes.

The media has been slow to reflect the immense changes in women's lives over the last two decades — the diversity of lifestyle and workforce experiences, expertise and ambition that women of all ages and backgrounds now exhibit. The media would be far richer and more pleasing to women consumers if it recognised and reflected the new realities of our lives.

The following is an extract from the notes agreed to by the National Working Party on the Portrayal of Women in the Media. Peak industry bodies have distributed the notes, which are a world first, to advertising agencies throughout Australia.

Portraying Women in Advertising Advisory Notes

Authority

Women wish to see themselves portrayed in advertising as intelligent, informed and competent. This has implications for female authority roles in three respects.

Experts and Presenters

International industry research indicates that female authority figures are as motivating as males in a wide range of categories.

Professional and Business Roles

It is important that advertisers recognise the degree of female participation in the professions and business, and the likely extent of this in the future, so that women are adequately and appropriately represented in a range of responsible roles.

Key Decision Makers

Both men and women are active decision makers in family, in the workforce and in the consumer market.

The nature of decision making is changing. Women are increasingly involved in decisions which have been the traditional domain of men and *vice versa*.

Recent Australian research indicates that in the majority of cases, joint decisions are made by couples on matters such as home loans, life insurance, home decoration, travel, and child education. Gender stereotyping of decision makers is becoming increasingly implausible.

Stereotyping

The role of women used in advertising would advisedly reflect the diversity of Australian women in a genuine and natural manner. This relates not only to particular roles but also to age, appearance, and ethnic origin, according to varying target markets.

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Sexuality

It is important that sexuality in advertising is relevant, respects the dignity of individuals, and is non exploitive.

Consumers object to the use of overt sexuality which has no relevance to the product being advertised. Advertising which presents the body, and therefore the person, as simply sexual decoration and the object of sexual gratification or sexual ridicule is dehumanising. Because of the sensitivity of this issue, particular care should be taken in the portrayal of girls under 16 years.

Family Composition and Lifestyle

It is desirable that advertising reflects trends in family composition and lifestyle.

There is a wide variety of lifestyles, family compositions and household arrangements in Australia today.

While women who choose to stay at home see dignity and personal fulfilment in that choice, their perspective on domestic life has changed. Whereas women may have seen looking after their families as almost the whole of their life, it is now more a part of their life.

Women in paid or unpaid work are well-informed today. They have a strong sense of individuality and a wider range of interests. In this respect, the domestic role needs to be portrayed in advertising in a realistic perspective, so as not to suggest it is the very centre of a women's self worth.

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Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Develop education programs to encourage a greater understanding in the community of how the communications industry works, as well as how the public can gain greater access to the regulatory processes.
- Recognise the rapid development of media and communication technology and seek to ensure that media content of all emerging technologies portrays women in a fair manner.
- Monitor the impact on women, as consumers, of new media such as pay television.
- Monitor the opportunities and impact of new technology on women working in the industry.
- Examine the effectiveness of industry self-regulation systems and, in particular, their ability to reflect community attitudes regarding the portrayal of women. If necessary, means of strengthening the self-regulation systems should be found. This could include an inquiry by the Australian Broadcasting Authority on the development of a Code of Practice on the portrayal of women.
- Monitor and encourage equal employment opportunity in the media industry, with particular regard to women in decision making positions. Continue to educate people in key industry roles on this issue.
- Continue to provide a forum for the industry, consumers and government to discuss concerns about the portrayal of women in the media and to identify areas of common ground, including work on what women want to watch.
- Seek the integration of the National Working Party's training package on women and advertising into industry training and general educational curriculums.
- Monitor the impact on women, as consumers of new media such as pay television and subscription and open narrowcasting (targetted) services.

Progress So Far

The second half of the twentieth century in Australia has brought large scale technological changes in the delivery of media and information services to the community. This trend is gathering pace. People now have access to a wide range of services. At the same time there is attention being given to the impact of these changes on the portrayal of women in the media.

Television, radio and video technology are available to most households. Computers are being used increasingly at home, work and school. Access to pay television is planned within the next few years.

Setting standards for these media services, including advertising, is largely by self regulation while the government and statutory authorities regulate in specific areas including:

- classifying films, videos and literature;
- establishing and enforcing broadcasting program standards; and
- granting broadcasting licences.

The Commonwealth Government has systems to ensure that its own advertising is non-sexist. Broadcasters are responsible for maintaining codes of practice, standards and complaints procedures.

The increasing importance of the media in the lives of women has resulted in growing attention by women to issues such as the visibility and portrayal of women in the media, as well as women's employment in the industry and their access to decision making.

This concern has been marked by the publication of books such as:

- *Media She* (1974), which examined socialisation and the role of the media; and
- *Fair Exposure* (1983), which offered guidelines for a more constructive portrayal of women in the media.

Other key developments include the establishment of community groups such as MediaSwitch, which monitors the portrayal of women in the media, the Coalition Against Sexual Violence Propaganda, a network of women's groups concerned about representations of sexual violence against women, and Women in Film and Television, which provides support for women working in the industry.

The Commonwealth Government acknowledged this issue in the first National Agenda and through a public forum on the portrayal of women in advertising held in October 1988. Following the forum the National Working Party on the Portrayal of Women in the Media was established for a four-year term (1989-93). This is a tripartite group with representatives from the media industry, Government and community. In its first two years it focused on advertising but has since broadened its focus to the media more generally.

The National Working Party has worked to raise the level of debate in the community and industry. It has also facilitated understanding and communication between various groups with an interest in the media. Concensus on the Advisory Notes for advertising is an example of an improved understanding of the issues.

Other important initiatives have been the publication of a resource training package for advertising and related training courses, a survey of women's employment in the

film, television, video and radio industry and a complaints brochure outlining effective means of registering complaints.

Some positive developments in the industry include: the Special Broadcasting Service establishing a policy that its programs portray women and girls in a way that does not reinforce sexual or racial stereotypes.

In 1991, 24 per cent of senior management in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation were women. The ABC's EEO Plan aims to achieve 50 per cent representation in senior and middle management by 1994.

Pressure from women in the community resulted in a new set of guidelines for the classification of publications and poster advertising throughout Australia by the Standing Committee of Attorneys General and Censorship Ministers in 1992. These tighten guidelines on depictions of acts of violence and in particular acts of sexual violence. Additionally, in the same year, 'adult' messages were removed from Telecom 0055 services in response to public concern.

Photo: Catherine Marciniak

Film makers Lyndal and Sophie Barry on location in Burma.
Location shot, Barefoot Student Army, December 1991.
Co-production between Open Channel Productions Ltd and Lyndal and Sophie Barry.

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Education 4

Achievements So Far

Between 1982 and 1991, the **Year 12 retention rate** for young women rose from 39.9 to 76.7 per cent.

Since 1983, **enrolments of women in higher education** grew by 77 per cent compared with 33 per cent for males.

Women **enrolling in engineering courses** rose from 5 per cent to 11 per cent between 1983 and 1992.

In 1986, two **Centres of Excellence** were established — Women's Health in Society at The University of Melbourne and School Science and Maths for Women at Curtin University of Technology.

Women's share of enrolments in higher education in 1991 was 53 per cent.

Some 36 per cent of students doing **doctoral studies** in 1991 were women.

In 1992, women made up 49 per cent of all **postgraduate students.**

'Girls need an education which will be their key to a full and rich life.'

Many schools are already making sure that girls value themselves and are respected, because girls with high self-esteem can make the most of the educational opportunities offered to them.

To achieve the outcomes we want, schools have to provide girls with an environment that fosters their self-confidence and self-respect from their earliest days in education.

More and more, we are recognising that what people learn at school builds the foundation for their success in the workforce. Education for older children increasingly emphasises skills that will help them at work and throughout life.

Lack of fairness in educational opportunities for girls at school can handicap them for their whole adult and working lives. Lack of access to adult education opportunities for older women prevents them from overcoming this handicap.

Girls can, and should, learn anything they seek to. We must make sure they are not excluded from some subjects by the way they are taught. In particular, if girls seek to learn maths and science there should be no artificial barriers to prevent them.

Equally, schools must acknowledge the skills needed in subjects more traditionally studied by girls and recognise the value of developing these skills as a preparation for adult life.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Implement policies to meet the objectives of the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools, which are:
  - to raise awareness of girls' educational needs;
  - to achieve equal access and participation;
  - to provide a supportive school environment; and
  - to achieve equitable resource allocation.
- Ensure that the educational needs of women and girls are considered as an integral part of administrative decisions, policy and program development.
- Achieve targets set for women in the National Plan for Equity in Higher Education:
  - a 40 per cent increase in the proportion of women in non-traditional courses (excluding engineering) by 1995;
  - the proportion of women in engineering courses to increase to 15 per cent by 1995; and
  - the number of women in postgraduate study to increase relative to the proportion of women undergraduates in each field by 1995.
- Encourage higher education institutions to maintain special entry, bridging and support programs and increase child care facilities to increase women's opportunity of access to higher education.
- Encourage higher education institutions to create and promote opportunities for women in higher education, particularly in the areas of science, technology and engineering, but without devaluing women's traditional fields of study.
- Review the prerequisites for technological and business courses to see that they are relevant and necessary.
- Promote the key competency areas identified by the 1991 Mayer Committee as a framework for recognising women's and girls' skills.
- Monitor the participation of female students in the fields of science, technology and business courses.
- Encourage higher education institutions to provide appropriate support for women in non-traditional areas.
- Improve education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy which aims:

- to increase involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in educational decision making;
- to promote the vocational relevance of knowledge of society, communication skills, and other outcomes of education in the humanities;
- to ensure equality of access to educational services;
- to achieve equity of educational participation; and
- to increase funding and numbers of pre-school and other places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy program.

- Encourage the provision of culturally appropriate information on education options available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from a non-English speaking background.

- Support opportunities for women in research and postgraduate fields of study by providing fellowships, postgraduate research and course awards.

- Ensure that there is a full of range of postgraduate options available.

- Ensure that the needs of women and girls are considered in any developments in the field of non-formal adult education.

- Promote new technologies in the delivery of educational programs to increase opportunities for rural women and women with family responsibilities and employed women seeking to upgrade their qualifications or change their career paths.

- Make sure that successful strategies and innovations are publicised with a view to raising the quality of education for women and girls.

Progress So Far

Education is of primary importance to girls and young women and although they now stay at school longer than boys, the knowledge and skills they acquire are not reflected in their choices for further education and employment.

The past ten years have seen an increasing awareness of the factors which contribute to the differing experiences, opportunities and outcomes for boys and girls in education and an effort to address imbalances.

The 1984 Sex Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for schools, colleges and universities to discriminate against a person on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy by refusing to accept applications or admission or by denying or limiting access to a benefit or by subjecting students to detriment. There is an exemption for religious schools (currently under review) and single sex schools.

In 1984, the then Schools Commission published a report, *Girls and Tomorrow: The Challenge for Schools*, which reviewed action to improve the education of girls over

the previous decade. The report led to the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools, which was finally endorsed by the Australian Education Council (AEC) in 1987. The policy objectives include: increased understanding of the issues involved in gender disadvantage; equal access to and participation in appropriate curriculum; provision of a supportive school environment; and equitable resource allocation.

Early priority areas for the National Policy were to look at girls' participation in subjects such as mathematics, science and technology, and to look at work and career education and counselling. More recent attention has been focused on the elimination of sexual harassment, addressing the needs of girls at risk, improving teaching practices and reforming the curriculum. One of the objectives of a $3 million national project to reform school curricula is to ensure that curriculums are equally relevant to girls and boys. Project funds are being used to ensure that national curriculum statements, assessment practices and course materials all have equal relevance for both sexes.

The AEC established a working party in 1991 to review the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools. The working party report has been published as an Action Plan, directed at school systems and authorities. It encourages direct action in such areas as curriculum, girls' classroom experience, the behaviour and attitudes of males towards females and changes to the social, physical and cultural environments in which girls learn.

The National Advisory Committee on the Education of Girls has been established by the AEC to monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan and to provide advice to the AEC on other major national initiatives in education.

One measure of the success of the school system in meeting the needs of girls is the secondary school retention rate, which has improved dramatically over recent years. In 1982, 40 per cent of girls stayed at school until year 12; by 1991 the retention rate had reached 76.1 per cent, compared with 66.1 per cent for boys.

Women's participation in higher education has also increased dramatically. In 1982, 46 per cent of higher education students were w[illegible]men; by 1991 this had increased to 52.7 per cent. While this increase is encouraging, women are still not participating equally in all types of courses. For example, in 1991 women comprised over 68 per cent of enrolments in arts and education and about half of enrolments in medicine, law and veterinary science, but only 11 per cent of enrolments in engineering courses.

On the other hand, in 1991 the fields of arts and education accounted for less than 50 per cent of female enrolments, and this is a significant change from 70 per cent in the early 1980s.

The uneven pattern of enrolments flows directly into employment opportunities. Women are also under-represented in post graduate, teaching and research positions in higher education.

The Higher Education Equity Program seeks to address some of these issues by encouraging higher education institutions to give priority to equity considerations in their allocation of resources, with national objectives to have at least 40 per cent of places in 'non-traditional' courses other than engineering taken by women by 1995; to have women fill 15 per cent of engineering places by 1995; and to increase the number of women in postgraduate study.

The Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program is assisting sole parents to achieve financial independence through education and training, particularly through the introduction of Austudy for part-time study and the Education Entry Payment. The program provides more flexible arrangements for people to undertake study and to assist with the start up continuing costs of education. Since its introduction in January 1992, 13 300 sole parent pensioners have received an Education Entry Payment.

An Open Learning Initiative commencing in 1992-93 will contribute funding towards the provision of tertiary education open learning programs. The initiative will build on the successful TV Open Learning pilot project which commenced in 1991. Participants will be able to study entirely through open learning if they wish, or transfer later to on-campus study. Open Learning has the potential to be of particular benefit to women with work or family commitments which make on-campus study difficult, as well as to women with disabilities and those in rural and remote areas.

Photo: John Houldsworth

Learning by inquiry, an all-girl science class in the Australian Capital Territory.

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Training 5

Achievements So Far

The number of **traineeships** in the Australian Traineeship Scheme increased from 1735 in 1986 to 9129 in 1992 — women make up 69 per cent of the participants.

The introduction of the **Training Guarantee** legislation in 1990 encouraged employers to commit more money to training their employees.

In 1992, women received about 42 per cent of Department of Education, Employment and Training **labour market program opportunities.**

The **Women's Employment, Education and Training Advisory Group** (WEETAG) was formed in 1990 to provide independent advice to Government on employment, education and training issues affecting women.

In 1991, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments developed the **National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE** to provide a co-ordinated approach to improving women's participation.

'Good training is a first step in getting a good job and developing a career.'

If women are to contribute fully to the Australian workforce, they need a fair share of training opportunities.

Young women should have the same chances as young men to study at TAFE. Older women should have access to training courses that develop and build on their skills.

Sole parents and other women with family responsibilities should have opportunities to participate in training that fits in with their other commitments.

Women with special needs, such as women of non-English speaking background, women with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, should have access to training that meets their particular requirements.

Women's skills need to be acknowledged and rewarded. We often miss out on training because the skills we use in jobs, like clerks and shop assistants, are not recognised.

In our unpaid work at home and in the community we develop many skills — in communication, working together with people, and organising things. Employers and training bodies, such as TAFE, need to be aware of these skills and to recognise their value in the workplace.

Greater recognition of the skills we use in our jobs should lead to increases in our status and pay.

There are big changes happening in the training system in Australia. More training for more people is being seen as a vital part of making the economy more productive.

We want to be sure that these changes will give women a fair and equal share of opportunities for training and skills development.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Improve women's access to training opportunities, by:

  - emphasising to employers, industry bodies, unions, the community, and women employees the importance of training and career paths for women employees;
  - ensuring that flexible and innovative ways of training are developed to meet the needs of all women, including those working part-time and casually;
  - ensuring that gender equity is a major consideration in the implementation and operation of the new entry level training system; and
  - providing access to English language training for women of non-English speaking background.

- Develop practical measures to encourage and assist women with a disability to take part in training.

- Develop mechanisms for valuing women's skills through:

  - recognition of prior learning which gives credit for and values skills acquired through paid work, unpaid work and life experience; and
  - recognition of abilities in communication, dealing with people, and managing a variety of tasks which have not previously been given status as skills.

- Reduce the level of occupational segregation by reducing gender segregation in vocational training, particularly entry level training, through:

  - implementing the relevant recommendations and objectives under the Women in Entry-Level Training report and the National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE, including taking steps to reduce gender bias in TAFE teaching; and
  - implement special measures to ensure equal participation by males and females in the entry-level training system by the year 2000 as recommended by the 'Carmichael' Report, *The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System*.

- Encourage the combination of training and family responsibilities for all workers, particularly sole parents, in accordance with Australia's commitment under International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156 by:

  - increasing child care places and improving women's access to them; and
  - improving training for women combining work and family responsibilities by working part-time.

- Ensure that training and retraining programs target women in industries and occupations affected by technological developments and structural change.

- Maintain equitable representation of women in all components of the Training for Aboriginals Program.

- Through the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy, target Aboriginal women as a key priority to be encouraged to participate in the full range of programs at all levels.

- Increase participation of middle-aged women of non-English speaking background in training programs by targeting information provision to those industries that employ a high proportion of these women.

- Work to ensure adequate representation and participation of women in decision making processes in training by:

  - implementing the relevant objective of the National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE, to increase the number of women at management levels in TAFE; and
  - Commonwealth contributions to decision making bodies (such as the Vocational Employment, Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee (VEETAC), and the VEETAC Women's Standing Committee).

- Monitor the participation and outcomes for women in training through collection of appropriate data and statistics, by:

  - developing appropriate computerised data collection systems to monitor women's participation in TAFE and training;
  - evaluating and reviewing relevant Government policy and programs; and
  - ensuring that all statistics on training collected through Government agencies, including the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), are designed to include, where relevant, data on participation and outcomes for women in training.

Progress So Far

Women in Australia receive their vocational training principally from tertiary institutions, including universities and TAFE, from secondary schools and private training institutions, and by informal means such as 'on-the-job' training and in the home.

The lack of structured employment training and formal accreditation of women's skills means women are denied the recognition and rewards in the workplace that men with comparable skills receive. There are major imbalances in the participation of women in TAFE. While the total participation of males and females in TAFE is approximately equal, women tend to be found only in certain courses. For example, women are concentrated in secretarial courses and non-vocational courses in social science and community service areas. Women take only 12 per cent of all apprenticeships, and half of them are in hairdressing.

In 1981, the National Working Party of TAFE Women's Advisers was established to report on the development of programs and the promotion of equality of opportunity and outcomes for women in TAFE.

In 1984, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission's *Report of the Triennium 1985-87* supported measures to improve the equality of access to education. These measures included child care, full-time pre-vocational and pre-apprenticeship courses, bridging and remedial courses, as well as other initiatives to increase female participation in vocational TAFE courses, including those in non-traditional areas.

In 1989, the Commonwealth Government approached State and Territory Ministers who agreed to participate in the development of a national plan to address the needs of women in TAFE. In October 1991, A National Plan of Action - Women and TAFE, was launched. The plan's objectives are to improve paths of entry for all women into accredited TAFE courses; to improve women's participation in vocational training; to improve the learning and physical environment for women; and to improve support services for women.

Alongside these developments have been moves that have the potential to recognise, through proper accreditation, and reward women's skills. In 1985 following recommendations of the Kirby Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programs, the Australian Traineeship Scheme (ATS) was introduced. The ATS was a significant step towards the recognition of women's skills. This scheme applies to occupational areas where apprenticeships traditionally are not available. It provides a mixture of study and work experience. Sixty-nine per cent of participants are women. It is anticipated that as greater recognition is given to the skills required to work in industries such as hospitality, sales and clerical, the rewards and status will improve.

The *Report into Young People's Participation into Post-Compulsory Education and Training*, known as the Finn Review, was released in July 1991. It recommended a convergence between vocational and general education, national targets for education, flexibility in the delivery of education and training, credit transfer between sectors, the investigation of key vocationally relevant competencies, and recognition of prior learning throughout the system.

In 1992, the Mayer Committee reported on its investigations into the development of vocationally relevant key competencies which can be assessed in schools and TAFEs, as recommended by the Finn Committee. This report is an important vehicle for addressing the recognition of traditionally undervalued women's skills such as communication, organisation and team work.

Training

The Carmichael Report, released in March 1992, outlines a new national system of vocational training and certification. This far reaching review recognises that the training system does not meet the needs of the emerging workforce, and especially the increased participation of women in paid work and the expansion of the service sector of the economy. The new system emphasises flexibility and the need for a number of pathways to vocational certificates through full-time education, part-time work and study, and full-time work incorporating structured training. It broadly endorses the participation targets set by the Finn Review. The report emphasises the need for a 'critical mass' of girls in any particular training environment.

To implement the Carmichael Report, pilot projects will be established in key industries in consultation with industry training bodies. The new system will be overseen by a council of Commonwealth and State Ministers and a new statutory body, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

The Government's labour market programs have provided an avenue for training, in which women have been well represented. The Jobs, Education and Training program (JET) provides access to training for sole parent pensioners, of whom 94 per cent are women. This innovative program assists sole-parent pensioners to gain access to employment, education and training opportunities and also helps with child care.

Photo courtesy of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Learning mapping skills.

Photo courtesy of Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Young women, part of the base upon which a competitive and productive Australia can expand and grow.

Achievements So Far

Since 1983, the number of young women in **higher education** increased by 77 per cent.

The Prime Minister's **National Employment and Training Plan for Young Australians** was launched in 1992, and includes measures specifically to increase employment and training opportunities for young women.

The **Active Girls Sports Campaign** was launched in 1991 to increase the participation in sport of adolescent girls.

The **Youth Social Justice Strategy** was launched in 1989 to provide all-round assistance for young people. From 1991 it focused on needy groups including disadvantaged young women.

Over the period 1986 to 1992, the **income support for homeless young women** and those leaving home due to violence and sexual abuse was substantially improved.

'We want the choices and opportunities to live our lives to the full.'

Young women have a great deal to offer. Australia's future depends on us. We want opportunities to learn and develop, to be independent and to enjoy our lives. We want to live free of violence and harassment.

Between the ages 15 and 25, young people face a period of rapid change and development which is very demanding. The opportunities and choices made during this period substantially affect our long-term chances in life.

We need education and training which equips us to support ourselves through life and to deal with adult life.

We know that Australia is going through a time of change and adjustment. Jobs are being shed in many industries and there are fewer unskilled jobs available to us. We know that Australia has to be clever, innovative and efficient to prosper.

Young women want to be part of this process. We are part of the base on which a competitive and productive Australia can expand and grow. We want to share in the rewards of good jobs and financial security that such an Australia can deliver.

Young women seeking full-time employment face higher unemployment rates than young men. We want equal opportunities in the workforce. We will not accept restrictions that bar us from the interesting and well paid jobs or that put obstacles in the way of getting jobs at all.

The **SHOUT (Sexual Harassment is OUT) Campaign** was launched in 1990. It was directed to young women who are in or about to enter the workforce.

But our concerns are much wider than education and jobs. We are concerned with our world, the environment, relationships, families, our peers, our health. We are confronted with issues such as smoking, drinking, eating disorders, our sexual health, the threat of AIDS.

Decision makers need to take notice of our views on these and other important issues that affect our lives. This is the only way to achieve appropriate services and programs that really meet our needs. Appropriate services are very important for young women who are disadvantaged or in trouble and particularly vulnerable to exploitation, homelessness and health risks.

We must build our confidence and self-esteem and demand opportunities to allow us to play our essential part in Australia's future.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Address young women's specific needs in the development and delivery of the Government's strategy for young people.
- Listen to young women equally with young men in Government activities to ascertain young people's views.
- Ensure young women's participation in public activities concerning the status of women is strongly promoted.
- Improve girls' status, participation and access to general and vocational education, through initiatives such as the National Policy on the Education of Girls in Australian Schools, and its National Action Plan, 1993-97.
- Increase the diversity of courses undertaken by young women.
- Extend opportunities for job-based vocational training for young people who leave school early.

- Ensure that income support arrangements for young people provide equal access for young women to education and training.
- Examine ways to better assist sole parents who are 15 to 25 years old including returning to education and finding employment.
- Monitor trends in young women's access to public housing and crisis accommodation and seek, with the States and Territories, to meet demonstrated needs.
- Direct assistance to the needs of the most disadvantaged young women especially inner urban homeless, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, young offenders, those of non-English speaking background and those with disabilities.
- Continue to encourage the participation of girls and young women in physical fitness activities as an important factor contributing to their health and self-esteem, and provide special programs to assist this end.
- Effectively address problems such as drug, alcohol and tobacco usage and eating disorders among young women.
- Study the needs of young women in rural and remote Australia, to identify ways of better meeting such needs.
- Improve data collection to monitor the extent to which young women are assisted by the Youth Social Justice Strategy.

Progress So Far

Young women between 15 and 25 years of age move to adulthood, face major decisions that have a lasting impact on their lives and come to terms with the issues of personal importance to them. Issues that pre-occupied young people in the 1980s such as the arms race and the threat of nuclear conflict have receded. Now many young people are concerned about the environment and the menace of AIDS. One consistent worry over the last decade has been unemployment as young women in particular have suffered as a result of changes in the structure of the workforce.

The Prime Minister held a National Meeting on Youth Employment and Training in July 1992. The meeting brought together young people, business, union, community and Government representatives. Shortly afterwards, The National Employment and Training Plan for Young Australians was released providing a new approach to preparing young people for employment.

The new Australian Vocational Certificate (AVC) training system will make it easier for young people to move from school to the workforce. The AVC will cover more industries to ensure better access to vocational preparation. Young people who leave school early in particular will benefit from these changes. Some of the training and employment plans that will encourage the participation of young women include the

new Landcare and Environment Action Program, the new Accredited Training for Youth Program, increased TAFE places and pilot programs for young homeless people that link accommodation, counselling training and employment.

Young women particularly teenagers, are also targeted for assistance under the Jobs, Education and Training program (JET) for sole parents.

Education is of primary importance to young women and although they now stay at school longer than boys, the subjects they choose often limit their choices for further education and employment. So the Government has developed a number of initiatives to help.

The National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian School, adopted by Commonwealth and State Governments in 1987 provides a comprehensive national policy for improving schooling and its outcomes for girls. A major strategy to encourage female participation in education, initiated in 1990, was the Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project. Other strategies included the National Statement on Girls and Mathematics.

A National Action Plan, directed at school systems and authorities was prepared in 1991. It encourages direct action in such areas as curriculum, girls' classroom experience, the behaviour and attitudes of males towards females and changes to the social, physical and cultural environments in which girls learn.

A National Advisory Committee on the education of girls has also been established. It monitors the implementation of the National Action Plan and provides advise on other major national initiatives in education.

To increase further educational opportunities for young Australians, the Government introduced AUSTUDY in 1987. The 1992 Reforms to AUSTUDY and ABSTUDY will give greater financial flexibility and assist students in financial difficulty. More than half of the recipients of AUSTUDY and ABSTUDY are women.

Young women at risk are the main recipients of the Young Homeless Allowance (now called the Homeless Rate of the Job Search Allowance) introduced in 1986. The waiting period was reduced from six to two weeks in 1990 and removed for applicants in exceptional circumstances, including those at risk of violence or sexual abuse. The Job Search Allowance for young people was introduced in 1988 and assists many young women looking for employment.

As part of the Government's Social Justice Strategy it introduced the Youth Social Justice Strategy (YSJS) in 1989. This aims to provide an integrated package of assistance that includes accommodation for the homeless, income support, help in the labour market, education, health and access to information and advice. From 1991 the Strategy was focused on the most disadvantaged young people in vulnerable groups.

The national network of Youth Access Centres was expanded under the YSJS. The Centres focus on providing occupational information including options in non-

traditional occupations. A 1991 evaluation of the Youth Access Centres found a high level of acceptance of Centres among young women as sources of support.

Serious problems for young women include circumstances which place them at risk. A number of Youth Activity Services provide outside school hours care for 11 to 16 year olds living in disadvantaged areas. The services aim to enhance the self esteem and confidence of young people by providing attractive alternatives to activities that place them at risk.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) provides recurrent funding for crisis accommodation and support services for homeless people. Capital funding is provided under the related Crisis Accommodation Program. Young women are one of the most vulnerable groups of SAAP clients owing to their age and their experience of exploitation and abuse. The Commonwealth has recently funded a number of projects to identify means of improving service provision for homeless young women.

In order to promote a healthy lifestyle for young people, a number of initiatives have been taken under the National Alcohol Campaign introduced in 1988. These have the objective of delaying the commencement of drinking, 'deglamourising' drunkedness and reinforcing responsible use of alcohol. Over one-fifth of the budget for the campaign was used specifically to target young women.

The Smoking Who Needs It? campaign was launched in early 1990 and continued in 1991 following research which indicated that the positive imagery of a non-smoking lifestyle was successfully reaching the campaign's target group. The campaign targeted the 12-15 year old girls to reinforce their decision not to smoke or to encourage experimental smokers to stop and 20-24 year old women to encourage them to stop smoking.

The Active Girls Sport Campaign was launched in 1991 to promote a healthy lifestyle through increased participation in sport. The Campaign assists schools and community groups to support girls in various sport activities and programs.

Young women want choices in education, training, employment and lifestyle, they want to be independent and have the time to enjoy their youth. We should aim to give them the best opportunities we can so that they can fulfil their aspirations.

Photo courtesy of Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Lauren Peri,
Motor Mechanic,
Brisbane City Council

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Employment 7

Achievements So Far

From 1983 to 1992, the percentage of **women in the workforce** rose from 44 to 52 per cent.

The number of **women employed** increased from 1983 to 1992 by about 40 per cent compared with about 14 per cent for men.

The ratio of **women's to men's earnings*** increased from 87.4 to 90.1 per cent between 1983 and 1991 — the ratio of women's to men's over-award earnings also increased from 44 to 61.5 per cent.

Since the early 1980s, **permanent part-time work** has become more widely available particularly in the public sector and increasingly in the private sector.

The Government ratified **the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156,** Workers with Family Responsibilities in March 1990.

'There are now more than 3 million women in Australia's workforce — and we are here to stay.'

There are now 3.2 million women employed in Australia's workforce compared with 4.5 million men. We are doing our fair share to make this country efficient and productive and we expect a fair deal at work in return.

We want to be fairly paid for the work we do. We want a fair share of training and promotion opportunities and a chance to compete equally for the top jobs. We want to be confident that we will not be harassed or discriminated against in our workplaces.

We want to combine paid work with family life when we need to, without having to become 'superwomen'. We want jobs that offer flexible working hours and job sharing opportunities to suit those with young children.

We want more opportunities for permanent part-time work so that all workers can share in the benefits of sick leave, paid holidays and access to training and career development.

The work women do must be recognised for its proper value. Jobs most frequently done by women — those of clerks, waitresses and shop assistants — require a high level of skills, and we want to be paid for those skills.

* Ordinary time earnings for full-time adult non-managerial workers.

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The Government announced in September 1992 that **companies in breach of affirmative action legislation** for women workers will be ineligible for Commonwealth Government contracts, of the order of $10 billion annually.

Some women are moving into jobs which traditionally were done by men and there should be no artificial barriers to their choice.

Our participation in the paid workforce is now so strongly established that our work is vital to the economic well-being of Australia.

We are glad to make that contribution, but we insist on a fair deal in return.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Implement measures to eliminate barriers relating to the education, training and employment of women which prevent them achieving full equality with men in the workplace. These should include:

  - support for affirmative action programs in the private sector,
  - support for EEO in the public sector, and
  - removal of gender-based stereotyping in education and training.

- Continue to implement the Government's Equal Pay Policy by:

  - maintaining a national award system of minimum wages and conditions with wage rates established on a consistent work-value basis and which recognise the skills women possess,

  - supporting a fair and non-discriminatory approach to workplace bargaining aimed at ensuring workers are not disadvantaged by the terms and conditions of such agreements taken as a whole,

  - encouraging workplace negotiators to adopt a strategic approach to workplace bargaining which recognises, develops and rewards women's skills and productivity,

  - establishing mechanisms to monitor the impact of workplace bargaining developments on women and to redress any discriminatory outcomes,

  - encouraging employers to provide opportunities for permanent part-time work and other flexible working arrangements with access to career paths and training.

- Facilitate the implementation of ILO Convention No. 156, which is aimed at enabling workers with family responsibilities to be employed without discrimina-

tion and, as far as possible, without conflict with their family responsibilities. As an initial step, the Government has amended the Commonwealth *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* to prohibit the dismissal of an employee on the ground of family responsibilities.

- In an announcement on 19 September 1992, the Prime Minister also foreshadowed the Government's intention to investigate the possibility of extending the act more generally to cover family responsibilities as a ground for discrimination.

- Enhance support systems for women in employment, including child care provision.

- Work with the unions and employers to ensure that women are appropriately represented in workplace bargaining negotiations and their contributions to productivity recognised and rewarded, and particularly:

  - ensure that the needs of all women workers — including workers with family responsibilities, part-time and casual workers as well as all occupations at the workplace — are recognised in the bargaining process,

  - ensure that any changes to hours to improve flexibility are developed through consultation and take into account the needs of workers with family responsibilities, and

  - actively encourage women to participate in consultative mechanisms established to develop workplace agreements.

- Encourage women to join and seek office in trade unions.

- Support measures to ensure that outworkers receive adequate remuneration and are protected by industrial and workers' compensation legislation.

- Give priority to occupational health and safety issues for women, with particular reference to women from a non-English speaking background and women with a disability, through appropriate information and awareness programs.

- Make sure that employment programs target women in industries adversely affected by structural change.

- Ensure that the needs of women workers are taken into account in occupational and industrial restructuring projects.

- Foster equitable participation by women in labour market programs, with particular attention to women disadvantaged in the labour market, through:

  - improved monitoring of women's participation in labour market programs,
  - providing information to women, including information in major community languages, about labour market programs, training, retraining and employment opportunities,

- continuing special measures, such as the Jobs, Education and Training Program, to encourage the participation of sole parents in training programs to provide better opportunities for them to re-enter the workforce, and
- continuing to monitor outcomes for women with disabilities as a result of the Disability Reform Package, with a view to increasing their participation.

- Especially encourage Aboriginal women to participate in the full range of employment, training, education and economic development programs within the Aboriginal Employment Development Program and to use the Commonwealth Employment Service to seek training or employment.

- Develop special measures to ensure that Aboriginal women have the opportunity to participate equally with Aboriginal men in all employment programs.

- Develop special measures for women of non-English speaking background to participate equally with men of non-English speaking background in employment programs.

- Enhance the prospects of immigrant women through bridging, upgrading and retraining courses and develop equitable recognition in Australia of overseas acquired professional and technical qualifications.

- Develop strategies to promote the employment position of women in local government through the Local Government Ministers' Conference.

- Continue a Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) Action For Women Strategy that provides direction for the CES to achieve National Agenda for Women objectives, and, in particular, to encourage women to use the CES.

- Encourage the labour market to recognise women's skills, including skills gained in unpaid and voluntary work.

- Ensure that small business programs are accessible to women entrepreneurs.

- Support registers of women in non-traditional occupations to provide advice and role models for young women.

- Continue to examine jobs in Australia's Defence Forces with a view to extending the range of those open to servicewomen.

Progress So Far

Women's labour force participation has more than doubled since 1947 — from about 25 per cent to more than 50 per cent today. There are now 3.2 million women in paid employment and 4.5 million men.

Two Acts of the Federal Parliament have contributed to that acceptance. The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* made it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person on the ground of sex, marital status or pregnancy. The *Affirmative Action Act 1986* requires employers with more than a hundred employees to devise and report on strategies to achieve equality of employment opportunity for women.

Government programs to help disadvantaged women overcome barriers to workforce participation are also having a considerable impact. For example, the JET program for sole parents has helped many women into employment. In 1991-92, 9000 JET participants were placed in a job.

Despite the very large increase in the number of women in the labour force, the nature of women's paid employment remains substantially different from that of men. Women are still more likely to be in low-paid jobs without recognised qualifications and training, and far more likely to be working part-time.

Most industries and occupations in Australia employ a disproportionate number of either male or female workers. In May 1992, 55 per cent of women were employed as either clerks, salespeople or in personal service occupations. Industrial areas in which women predominate, such as retail trade, textiles, clothing and footwear, recreation and personal services, have the lowest average weekly earnings; and on average women earn less than men in every industry.

A number of Government policies now aim to address this 'occupational segregation'. Most are aimed at young women who are still in education, encouraging them into non-traditional occupations. In recent years, women have improved their participation in 'education based' occupations, particularly the professions, but not in the skilled trades for which apprenticeships are the main form of training.

The Australian Women's Employment Strategy, adopted by Federal, State and Territory Governments in 1988, established a set of national goals. They include improving women's access to a wider range of training and jobs, improving conditions and working arrangements for workers with family responsibilities, and promoting pay equity.

In many cases, women are employed in their own businesses and provide specialist tourism and travel services as well as training, marketing and conference organisation expertise. The heavy reliance by service industries on part-time and casual labour also provides job opportunities for many women who do not seek full-time work.

At the same time, the Government continues to promote and encourage the development of employment and training opportunities for women in industries where they are already employed as a part of its commitment to pursuing the implementation of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) legislation,for example, in the tourism industry.

Many women face conflicting work and family responsibilities. Inflexible working arrangements can exclude them from remaining in, entering, or re-entering the paid workforce and gaining career advancement.

The Government has a role in working with employer and community groups to ensure that working arrangements meet the needs of working families, not only because this is fair, but also because it makes economic sense to make the best use of available talent.

The history of the difference between women's pay and men's pay records that women's work used to be undervalued and seen as fundamentally different from men's work because it was seen as supplementary to the income earned by male breadwinners. This began to change with decisions of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in 1969 providing for equal pay for equal work, and in 1972 endorsing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

There have been significant changes in Australian industrial relations in the last ten years. Centralised wage fixing is seen as having helped women and other lower-paid workers, as all workers got wage increases, not just those with industrial strength (mainly male workers). However, the wage fixing principles operating during the early 1980s made it difficult to redress historical undervaluation of work and so tended to lock in women's relatively lower pay.

During 1986 and 1987 however, the wages allowances and career structures of nurses in several States and those employed by the Commonwealth were reviewed. Many nurses received pay increases and access to better career paths on a number of grounds, including work value changes, inequities and the non-application of the 1972 equal pay principles.

Since 1987 there has been a gradual decentralisation of wage fixing, with greater emphasis on workplace negotiations and a more co-operative approach between employers and unions. In 1988, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) endorsed the structural efficiency principle, which was the foundation for a wide ranging restructuring of awards, creating career paths based on skills and improving productivity.

An example of the benefits to women workers of award restructuring was the minimum rates adjustment (MRA) process, which set rates for work both within and between awards on a consistent basis having regard to the skill and responsibility involved. Before the minimum rates adjustment process became available, wages were largely determined by historical relativities and industrial bargaining power.

Under the MRA process, child care workers, for example, received substantial pay increases, after a review which found that their wage rates did not reflect the skills they used at work.

In 1990 the Government announced the ratification of International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities and the establishment of the Work and Family Unit in the Department of Industrial Relations.

The Government also supported a successful test case run by the ACTU in 1990 for the introduction of provisions for parental leave into industrial awards.

In recent times, the Government has supported a shift towards a managed system of workplace bargaining that will allow avenues for real efficiency gains to be identified and implemented in individual enterprises. Since October 1991, the wages system has provided for negotiations at workplace level between employers and unions over wages and conditions.

The *Industrial Relations Legislation Amendment Act 1992*, which came into force on 23 July 1992, contains provisions aimed at further facilitating and encouraging workplace bargaining. The Act fundamentally revises the provisions of the *Industrial Relations Act 1988* in regard to certified agreements.

Workplace bargaining has the potential to benefit women by providing them with opportunities to negotiate with their employers on issues particularly relevant to them. A number of agreements have already been reached that include provisions such as flexible work arrangements, assistance with child care, and career break schemes that are particularly beneficial to women.

The Government recognises, however, that women workers tend to work in industries where the measurement of productivity is difficult and where there are low levels of unionisation and organisation. The fact that many work on a casual or part time basis may also make it hard for them to negotiate.

The Government has built safeguards into its system of workplace bargaining to ensure it operates equitably and protects the interests of all workers. Workplace bargaining is underpinned by the safety net of the award structure with wage rates based on the value of the work performed. There are requirements that the provisions of a certified agreement cannot disadvantage workers and that agreements must reflect consultation by unions with their affected members. Recent amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act will extend the Act to cover new Federal awards and certified workplace agreements to enable complaints to be made under the Sex Discrimination Act about discriminatory awards.

On ratification of ILO Convention No. 156, the Work and Family Unit was established in the Department of Industrial Relations. The Unit is responsible for assisting the Government to implement the Convention, provide policy advice on work and family matters and work with and encourage employers, unions and State and Territory Governments to address work and family issues.

In early 1991, the Government established the Equal Pay Unit in the Department of Industrial Relations to implement the Government's pay equity policy. The Unit is responsible for providing advice to Government on pay equity matters; for developing and distributing information on equitable forms of workplace bargaining; and for monitoring the impact of workplace bargaining on women.

Photo courtesy of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Cartographer, remote sensing at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Queensland.

Child Care 8

Achievements So Far

Since 1983, the number of **Commonwealth-funded child care places** has increased from 46 000 to 193 000. In 1990, the Government announced a program to ensure 250 000 places by 1995-96.

The Government increased spending on **child care** from $65 million to almost $440 million between 1983 and 1992.

In 1984, the Government made **child care fee relief** available to low- and middle-income families.

In 1991, **fee relief** was extended to eligible families using private and employer-sponsored child care services. Over 130 000 families were assisted in 1991.

'Child care is an issue for families, for employers, for unions and for all levels of government. We need to work together to build a strong child care program and to make things work both at home and work.'

For too long child care has been seen as a women's issue and therefore our problem. Of course, we want child care to enable us to work, to study or to participate more fully in the community, but it is not only our responsibility.

We need good quality child care which provides a secure and enriching environment for our children at a price we can afford to pay. Almost one million of us who work have children under 12 and in some cases we are the sole breadwinner in the family.

We need child care for our children before they reach school age and once they are at school. We need out-of-school-hours care and vacation care. We need occasional care for our varying needs, and we need flexible and innovative forms of child care. We sometimes need care for our children when they are sick and we want child care which suits them, no matter what our different backgrounds.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

In partnership with State and Territory and local Government:

- Work with community groups, local and State Governments and employers to increase the supply of child care places.
- Fund 250 000 child care places by 1996 by completing the 1988 National Child Care Strategy, and by establishing 50 000 new places under the expanded National Child Care Strategy.
- Develop regional needs based planning to make sure new child care places go to areas of greatest need.
- Maintain affordability and target assistance to those most in need through direct fee subsidies.
- Promote the development of flexible services that meet the real needs of families to enable them to balance the responsibilities of home and work.
- Work with employers and unions to promote child care as a central part of work and family initiatives and workplace reform.
- Develop strategies to assist parents in the workforce with the care of sick children.
- Establish an industry-based accreditation system to foster good quality child care for child care centres.
- Provide support, training and advice to services to maintain and improve the quality of care and management.
- Develop user rights policies and practices in all child care services.

Progress So Far

Over the last 20 years the daily lives of Australian women and in turn their children's lives have undergone r pid change. The Commonwealth has recognised that providing child care services is cri cal for the economic development of the country and has embraced the view that hild care is a community issue and should therefore be addressed by business, unions, all levels of government as well as the community.

The development of the Commonwealth's Children's Services Program has a relatively short history starting as it did with the introduction of the Child Care Act in 1972, providing the first legislative base for Federal funding of child care.

The three objectives of the Children's Services Program are to provide and to encourage others to provide a supply of child care services that are affordable to parents and to provide good quality care for young children who use them.

Supply of Places

By 1983, 46 000 child care places had been established, but the child care budget had not increased in real terms since 1977. In 1983 the Commonwealth with State and Territory involvement embarked upon an ambitious plan substantially to increase the supply of child care places to meet the needs of working families.

The plan has been so successful that the number of Commonwealth Government-subsidised places increased from 46 000 to 193 000 in 1992. Since 1983, the Government has spent over $1.9 billion on child care, including $435 million in 1991-92. As at June 1992, 302 000 children attend child care services nationally.

The first growth plan established 20 000 new child care places by 1988. The National Child Care Strategy was launched in 1988 with a target of 30 000 new places over three years with the help of the States and employers. In 1990 a further expansion of supply was announced for an additional 50 000 places.

Initially the Commonwealth funded long day care centres, Family Day Care Schemes and neighbourhood centres. Later in response to an ABS survey, *Child Care Arrangements Australia, November 1984*, which highlighted the unmet need for short term care, guidelines were approved for the development of occasional care services to meet the child care needs of women in the home.

The Commonwealth also actively encourages the establishment of employer-sponsored child care in an effort to increase the number of child care places generally.

In 1986, the Government announced that the provision of child care facilities for employees by employers on their business premises would be exempt from Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT). FBT exemption has also been made available where an employer makes a contribution to obtain priority of access for the children of employees to places in child care centres that are eligible under the *Child Care Act 1972*.

In 1990, financial and management guidelines to enable public sector employers to provide child care for their employees were introduced. In 1992 the Commonwealth established Work and Child Care Advisory Services in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne to assist employers in the development of child care services for their employees. In the 1992-93 Budget, fee relief was extended to employer sponsored places in approved Family Day Care Schemes from 1 January 1993.

Fee Relief

In order to address the issue of affordability of child care the Commonwealth initiated a fee relief system for low- and middle-income earners using approved child care places.

Initially the Commonwealth paid fee relief in the form of special needs subsidies for sole parents or children from a non-English speaking background. In 1984 the Commonwealth introduced a more equitable fee relief system for low- and middle-income earners. The system has undergone several changes over the last decade. These include the involvement of the Department of Social Security in assessing family income for fee relief purposes to ensure consistency in assessment of applications and the extension of fee relief to parents using commercial and previously ineligible non-profit services. Many more families are now eligible to receive fee relief assistance, with over 130 000 low- and middle-income earners receiving fee relief in 1991.

In 1992-93 Budget the Commonwealth announced an increase in the fee relief ceiling to $108.50 per week to take effect from April 1993. The Government also announced that it would simplify and streamline long day care fee relief administrative arrangements, and established compliance units in each State and Territory to improve detection of and recovery of fraud and overpayments. An assets test with hardship provisions for fee relief eligibility will be introduced in July 1993.

Quality

For the child care program to be acceptable to Australian families it needs to address the quality of care that children are receiving as many children spend long hours away from home. At the end of 1991 the Interim National Accreditation Council was established to develop a system of quality assurance for long day care services. The final Report of the INAC was presented to Government at the end of 1992 and is currently under consideration.

Photo courtesy of the Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Quality Child Care, a community responsibility.

Sex Discrimination 9

Achievements So Far

In 1983, the Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) which forms one of the constitutional underpinnings for the Sex Discrimination Act.

In 1984, the **Sex Discrimination Act** provided a national framework to address sex discrimination and improve women's access to employment, facilities and services.

In December 1992, the Act was strengthened and extended to cover **industrial awards.**

The **Affirmative Action** (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act was passed in 1986.

In the March 1992 launch of the **Equal Pay Policy Statement**, the Government announced its commitment to protect workers, including women, against exploitation and discrimination in pay fixing arrangements including workplace bargaining.

'Women want a fair go. We won't put up with being discriminated against any more.'

Women in the 1990s are much more conscious of their rights. We will not accept being paid less than a man for the same work, or missing out on a promotion to a less competent man, or being told we can't do certain jobs, take out a bank loan, or understand the workings of the appliance we are buying.

Women demand respect. We are prepared to complain to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner about harassment. We just won't grin and bear it any more.

We may not all know that the Sex Discrimination Act reflects an international recognition of women's rights, but we know that times have changed.

As women's rights get stronger, women are getting stronger in asking for fair treatment.

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Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Consider reducing the number and/or scope of exemptions to the Sex Discrimination Act.
- Consider proposals to amend the Sex Discrimination Act further to prohibit discrimination on the ground of family responsibilities.
- Develop and implement an information strategy to address the needs of women from a non-English speaking background and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and raise their awareness of their rights under sex discrimination legislation.
- Encourage unions to use the Act on behalf of their members, and develop appropriate training and education material with unions to inform workers of their rights, including the effects of indirect discrimination.
- Continue to raise and maintain awareness among equal employment opportunity practitioners, unions, advocates, industry and the community about developments in sex discrimination law.
- Assist employers to improve the quality of affirmative action programs through a range of measures such as benchmarking, identifying performance indicators, best practice examples and cost benefit models.
- Increase community and workplace awareness of the benefits of affirmative action.

Progress So Far

The Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) came into effect in 1984. It is the legal framework for the Government's policies and programs for the elimination of discrimination on the ground of sex, marital status or pregnancy. It is based on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which Australia ratified in 1983.

The Sex Discrimination Act covers:

- employment;
- education;
- the provision of goods and services;
- accommodation;
- land;
- clubs;
- the administration of Federal programs; and
- (from 1993) Federal industrial awards.

The Act is administered by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

The Act has been both a symbolic and a practical source of support for women in their struggle for equality, especially in the workplace.

The legislation was controversial at the time of its introduction and several concessions were made, such as omitting affirmative action provisions, and including exemptions for the superannuation industry and religious schools. However, there is a now a greater understanding of discrimination in the community, and it has been possible to examine the Act in operation objectively and to provide fine tuning in the areas of the present exemptions.

Several amendments to improve its operation and widen its scope, including the replacement of the blanket exemptions for insurance and superannuation industries with more limited exemptions, have already been made.

Several aspects of the operation of the Act have recently been reviewed, by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (the Lavarch Committee) in the context of its Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner has recently completed a Review of Permanent Exemptions which recommends removal of most exemptions to the Act.

On 19 September 1992 the Prime Minister announced significant amendments to the Act. These reforms will strengthen the ability of the Act to tackle discrimination in some key areas.

The Act has been extended to cover Federal industrial awards and certified workplace agreements made after the date of the amending legislation. Workers can now take action through the Sex Discrimination Commissioner if their award or workplace agreement discriminates against them. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner can refer cases to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission which will be required to vary the award unless to do so would not be in the public interest.

Dismissal on the grounds of family responsibilitieshas also been prohibited, consistent with the Government's commitment to ILO Convention No. 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities.

The sexual harassment provisions of the Act were strengthened and extended. For the first time, complainants will not have to demonstrate disadvantage (such as loss of employment) when making a complaint.

Sexual harassment of students by other students, and of staff by students is now unlawful. The sexual harassment provisions of the Act have been extended to the provisions of goods and services.

There will also be measures facilitating group complaints, complaints of victimisation, and determinations will be made enforceable as an order of the Federal Court.

The Government will also examine the special measures and indirect discrimination provisions of the Act, review the exemptions for the defence forces and religious schools, and consider prohibiting discrimination on the ground of family responsibilities.

While the exemption from combat duties in the defence forces still stands, a range of combat positions are now open to women. With effect from 18 December 1992, women can serve in about 99 per cent of positions in the Navy and the Air Force including flying combat aircraft and serving on the new Collins class submarines. Over 80 per cent of positions in the Army are currently open to women.

Affirmative Action

The Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act came into operation in 1986. The Act applies to private sector organisations with more than 100 employees and all higher education institutions. The aim of the Act is to remove discrimination against women in employment, with the emphasis on positive programs to improve the position of women workers.

Employers are required to report each year to the Affirmative Action Agency on the progress of their affirmative action programs. Those who do not comply face being named in Parliament. There has been a very high level of compliance with the Act.

There is strong support for the Affirmative Action Act in the community. However, some confusion still exists about the purposes and processes of the Act. It is often incorrectly claimed that the affirmative action requires binding employment quotas. Rather, the Act requires the identification of goals to eliminate discrimination, which is part of good management practice.

While formal legal equality has now been won, women are still disadvantaged in their position and rewards in the workplace. The Affirmative Action Act is well placed to address the lack of opportunity arising from structural barriers to women's equal participation in the workforce. Many employers are now placing emphasis on the contribution of people to productivity, and more attention is being focused on how women participate in the workforce.

Key recommendations of the Effectiveness Review of the Act being conducted by the Agency's Director have been accepted by the Government and announced by the Prime Minister on 19 September 1992. Significant legislative amendments to the Affirmative Action Act include:

- extension of the operation of the Act to cover large private schools and charities employing 100 or more paid employees, bringing approximately 60 000 additional employees under the Act, and

- giving the Director of Affirmative Action the power to vary reporting requirements. This would allow the development of a scheme for a exempting exceptional reporters from reporting requirements for a number of years, similar to the 'exceptional trainer' status under the *Training Guarantee (Administration) Act 1990*.

Also, the Government has adopted a policy of contract compliance, whereby all Government departments will ensure that recipients of Government contracts and industry assistance have met their obligations under the Affirmative Action legislation. An advisory committee will be established to develop standards and codes of practice to assist employers to improve the quality of their affirmative action programs. A priority for the committee will be to develop general principles for compliance with the Eight Steps of an affirmative action program and codes to interpret them. Issues for consideration will include development of models for regular consultation with union representatives and employees.

Law could open door to women at men's clubs
A fairer go for all women
PM to end work bias against women
Discrimination loophole closed
Affirmative Action Act is given teeth
SEX HARASSMENT IN SCHOOLS OUTLAWED
PS contract out on chauvinism
Harder to get away with harassme: t
Sharper teeth for laws on women

Newspaper headlines announce improvements in combating sex discrimination.

Photo courtesy of Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs

Lita Marley,
Filipina counsellor,
assists a client at the
Footscray Migrant
Resource Centre,
Melbourne.

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Women of Non-English Speaking Background 10

Achievements So Far

In 1989, the Prime Minister launched the **National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia**, to encourage Australia towards a greater understanding of the strengths of a diverse culture and the needs of people of non-English speaking background for fair access to programs.

In 1989, the Government established the Commonwealth-State Council on **Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues.** The National Non-English Speaking Background **Women's Health Strategy** which it developed is now receiving attention at both Commonwealth and State level.

'Together with our Australian-born daughters, we make up almost 20 per cent of the Australian female population. We belong here and will continue to play a vital part in Australia's future.'

We'll do this by contributing at work, in our families and in the community.

But in the 1990s we want to look after our health and have more time for ourselves as well.

We want safer, healthier workplaces. We want more opportunities to develop our skills to suit the jobs of the 1990s.

We need a fairer share of government services.

We have come from many countries, and differ in our appearance, our language, our habits and our religions. But we basically share the same needs and aspirations.

We are making multiculturalism work as we form strong bonds of understanding and friendship with women of different backgrounds.

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Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

Language

- Extend the availability of English learning opportunities and literacy classes to women in the workplace and those undergoing or eligible for training.
- Incorporate issues raised in the 1992 Language Services Report produced by the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues into future policy reviews and program development.
- Provide effectively co-ordinated interpreting and translating services.
- Aim to ensure that Government information is provided in a wider range of languages of need and disseminated through channels used by women of non-English speaking background, including ethnic radio.
- Improve training of Government staff who have counter or telephone contact responsibilities, to help them identify language needs and assist clients of non-English speaking background, particularly women, to access and use services.
- Aim to ensure that all relevant Government programs and services are accessible to people of non-English speaking background, particularly women.

Employment, Education and Training

- Encourage women of non-English speaking background to increase their knowledge of workforce issues, such as awards and conditions, flexible work arrangements, training and retraining, rights of outworkers and occupational health and safety, through existing and specifically designed education programs.
- Encourage programs of recognition of prior learning, particularly taking into account skills of women from non-English speaking background.
- Incorporate issues raised the 1992 Report on non-English speaking background Women in the Australian Workforce, from the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues into future policy and program reviews and development.

Information

- Improve targeting and dissemination of Government information in key programs and services, to more effectively reach women of non-English speaking background.

- Develop improved community education and information concerning all forms of violence, including race violence and domestic violence, for women in ethnic communities.

- Improve the provision of information at overseas posts to women planning to migrate to Australia, on workforce conditions in Australia and other issues of concern.

- Actively encourage relevant government agencies to provide training which will increase staff proficiency in responding to the needs of women of non-English speaking background.

- Refine migration procedures to ensure that women considering migration, including dependents of male applicants for migration, are encouraged to seek Australian recognition of their qualifications while they are still overseas.

Access and Equity, EEO and Anti-discrimination

- Promote awareness of anti-discrimination laws.

- Continue a strong commitment to the principles of access and equity, equal employment opportunity, and anti-discrimination, targeting the needs of women of non-English speaking background.

- Further explore the needs of women of non-English speaking background for Government programs and services. These include employment, education and training, health, sport and recreation, community and institutional services, housing and in the justice system.

- Develop and implement initiatives to overcome identified barriers to, and gaps in, service provision.

Participation in Decision Making

- Actively encourage and monitor the appointment of women of non-English speaking background to Government boards and councils.

- Encourage all organisations to include women of non-English speaking background, in their decision making structures.

Families

- Ensure Government initiatives aimed at implementing ILO Convention No. 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities take account of the special needs of women of non-English speaking background.

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Health

- Give attention to the 1991 *Non-English Speaking Women's Health Strategy Report* from the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues.
- Take account of the mental health needs of women from a non-English speaking background in implementing the 1992 National Mental Health Policy.
- Further develop initiatives to assist non-English speaking background women at risk of, or suffering from, occupational injury or disease and those groups at special risk with regard to antenatal or post-natal health.
- Take up the strategies proposed in the National Non-English Speaking Background Women's Health Strategy in the further development of mainstream programs.

Data

- Encourage government and non-government agencies to collect and make available adequate gender, ethnicity and language-spoken data. Develop further the means for improving the availability of timely, reliable EEO data for women of non-English speaking background in the workforce.

Refugees

- Maintain the Woman at Risk program for refugee women. While most of the world's refugees are women, those resettled are overwhelmingly men. This program helps, in a small way, to redress the imbalance.
- Recognise the special need for training those working in the areas of torture and trauma with refugee women.

Progress So Far

Australia is a multicultural society. Recognising that multiculturalism has an impact on all areas of Government activity, the Government established the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in 1987.

OMA has appointed a network of regional co-ordinators who operate throughout the country to ensure effective communication between the non-English speaking background communities and Federal Government agencies and with State/Territory and community-based organisations. The co-ordinators are backed by a network of bilingual consultants to ensure that communities where many members are not yet proficient in English can have a say in Government processes.

In 1989, the Commonwealth announced the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, an action plan covering both short-term and long-term objectives

Women of Non-English Speaking Background

One Agenda initiative of direct benefit to women of non-English speaking background was the establishment of the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues. This body was set up in June 1989 to advise the Prime Minister on NESB women's issues and to assist the co-ordination of services for women of non-English speaking background at all levels of Government, and in community-based agencies. The Council is comprised of women appointed from Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and from ethnic communities.

The first major achievement of the Council was the development of the National Non-English Speaking Background Women's Health Strategy, a report published in September 1991. The Government has already taken up aspects of the National Non-English Speaking Background Women's Health Strategy in the implementation of the National Women's Health Policy.

The Council also made a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission's inquiry on Multiculturalism and the Law in 1991 and commissioned a report on the interpreting and translating needs of women of non-English speaking background, which was published in 1992.

The Commission has now reported to the Government on matters related to family, contract and criminal laws. It is expected that the Government will respond to the Commission's report in 1993.

New members of the Council were appointed in 1992 for a two year term. This second Council has resolved to concentrate on health and employment as top priority issues, and will retain a commitment to implementing recommendations on language services, a priority of the first Council.

The National Women's Consultative Council, the Government's prime source of advice from women outside government includes two women of non-English speaking background.

Another major initiative of the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia was the Community Relations Strategy (CRS). The CRS, which had its peak implementation phase in 1992, focused upon piloting innovative projects aimed at improving the level of community relations at the institutional and local levels. Under the Strategy some projects identified the needs of NESB women. For example models for the participation of NESB rural women in their local communities were trialled in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

CRS projects are being implemented by OMA, the Office of Local Government, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The CRS will be evaluated in early 1993 and particular attention will be paid on the impact of the Strategy on women of NES background.

The Commonwealth Government's Access and Equity (A & E) Strategy began as a policy response to service provision to people of non-English speaking background in 1985. In 1989 it was extended to include all groups who may face barriers of race,

religion, language or culture, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In 1992 a major cross-portfolio evaluation of the Strategy was concluded. The Report of the Evaluation made a range of recommendations which were endorsed by the Government and provide the basis for ongoing implementation of the Strategy.

Access and Equity is not about providing special services to migrants but about providing equal access top government services and a fair share of community resources to all Australians facing these barriers. It is about the rights and entitlements all should expect to enjoy and the benefits and participation all groups in the community should share in. It is about a 'fair go' for all.

Women from non-English speaking background are a key target group of the Access and Equity Strategy.

To test the value of Access and Equity, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is conducting research in various areas, including discrimination in employment, promotion and access to training opportunities, lack of access to English language training, lack of access to adequate child care facilities, poor interpreting services, difficulties in obtaining recognition of overseas qualifications, and difficulties with access to legal protection and redress. The findings will highlight areas where the delivery of services to women of non-English speaking background requires attention.

To improve settlement services, the Government conducted in 1991 a series of consultations which resulted in the development of the National Integrated Settlement Strategy (NISS). NISS is meant to improve the co-ordination of services to newly-arrived immigrants by Commonwealth, State, local and non-government agencies. Consultation on settlement matters is assisted by the National Settlement Advisory Council, a body created and chaired by the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs.

The Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) continues to provide a range of specific settlement services, for example the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) which teaches English as a second language to immigrants of non-English speaking background; a Translating and Interpreting Service; orientation information for new arrivals; and some specific on-arrival accommodation and related services for refugees. DILGEA also funds community organisations to provide settlement services and to advocate on behalf of NESB clients.

Recognising that the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) needed to better meet clients' needs; and to assist their chances in finding employment, the Government has recently changed the AMEP by giving more emphasis to providing jobseekers with adequate English language skills. A policy of user pays (with exemptions in cases of need) will assist the expansion and improvement of services to the non-English speaking background community.

In 1992, the Bureau of Immigration Research (BIR) organised the Women in Migration Conference 1992, to expose specific issues and concerns of immigrant women. The Conference generated a great deal of interest and numerous recommendations were approved and conveyed to relevant agencies for attention. As a result of the interest shown in the Conference, the BIR has resolved to run a Women's Conference on a yearly basis.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women 11

Achievements So Far

In 1992, the Commonwealth Government announced initiatives providing an additional $400 million over five years for **economic development and improving services** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 1991, the Government announced an extra $232 million to be spent over five years to improve **health, housing and infra-structure standards** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In 1991 some 40 per cent of participants in the **Community Development Employment Projects Scheme** were women – up from a low of 20 per cent in previous years.

The **Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women** was established in 1989 to encourage their appointment to government bodies.

'The contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are essential to the survival and development of our people. We must have respect and recognition.'

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women want to live free of discrimination and disadvantage on the grounds of race and sex. Of all women in Australia, we still have the poorest health, housing, education and economic circumstances.

A great deal of family and community responsibility is shouldered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. We face the task of trying to build up our communities which have often lost a lot of their traditional ways and structures.

For ourselves and our families, we seek a stronger role in the life and management of our communities. We want to share fully in decisions on how our economic resources are to be used. We want fair access to all Government programs.

Our priorities are violence-free communities; measures to revitalise our culture and languages; economic independence through expanding education, employment and training opportunities; and land, housing and health services.

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Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Provide equal access to mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and ensure these programs take account of the special needs and circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the design and delivery of policies and programs and in their monitoring and evaluation.
- Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as decision-makers and senior administrators.
- Empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through knowledge, skills and confidence development and support, to have a greater role in all spheres of activity.
- Set targets for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream programs and monitor the participation of women.
- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women play a strong role in the community planning processes that are to form the basis for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) funding and assistance from 1992.
- Ensure that programs of particular importance to, or focus on, Aboriginal women receive a fair share of available funds from ATSIC and other relevant agencies.
- Supplement the budgets of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations for the cost of introducing appropriate industrial award rates and conditions.
- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women participate fully and share equally in the initiatives taken in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- Introduce and/or maintain gender-specific programs where necessary, for example in a range of women's health areas.
- Provide assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's organisations and women's resource centres to suitably respond to community needs.
- Work towards eliminating the differences in health status, workforce participation, education and other social and economic indicators between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and other Australian women.

- Recognise that family and child care responsibilities deter many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from entering paid employment and seek to provide appropriate assistance.

- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and other women play a strong role in the reconcilitation process over the decade leading to the centenary of Australia's federation, 1 January 2001.

Progress So Far

As a result of European settlement, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lost possession of their land and control over their own lives. The culture, economies, health and family relationships of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities all suffered greatly. Racist attitudes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people developed and became entrenched in many government policies and programs.

The year 1967 marked a turning point in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history. In a Constitutional Referendum, 90 per cent of voters gave the Commonwealth the power to make special laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people concurrently with the States.

This opened the door for much greater Commonwealth involvement in the provision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services. Since then there has been a fundamental shift in Commonwealth Government policy towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. From telling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people what is best for them, policies have moved to asking them what they need. Now, finally, the Government is moving to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people back control over their own lives. Aboriginal women are saying loud and clear that they must not be left out of this process.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) set up in 1990, demonstrates the change. ATSIC is governed by a board of 20 Commissioners, 17 of whom are elected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is granted an annual allocation of funds ($703 million for 1992-93 representing more than half of all Commonwealth expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs). These funds are spent in line with the wishes and priorities of ATSIC's Board, i.e., the elected representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Four of the 20 members of the ATSIC Board, including the Chairperson, are women — two of the 17 elected representatives plus two of the three appointed by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Overall 25 per cent of ATSIC's 761 elected Regional Council members are women.

In 1983, the Commonwealth Government sought to hear the views and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, the first time any government had attempted to do so in a comprehensive way. It set up the Aboriginal Women's Task Force to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women across Australia.

The findings were presented in a report, titled *Women's Business*, which was tabled in both Houses of Parliament in May 1986. It identified the areas of health, housing, employment and education as women's top priorities.

Commonwealth programs set up over recent years of specific benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women include ATSIC's Family Violence Intervention Program, the Women's Initiatives Program which provides support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to develop, and control their own projects and the Support Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents (SNAP) set up by the Department of Social Security.

The National Aboriginal Health Strategy, introduced in 1991, includes many important projects including appropriate birthing centres, nutrition programs for mothers, policy development work on family violence and the establishment of nine new Aboriginal Health Services which provide services such as ante and post natal programs, family planning, contraception and sexually transmitted disease clinics and general gynaecological services.

Ensuring that the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are fully considered is the role of the Office of Indigenous Women (OIW) within ATSIC. The Office was set up by the Government in 1989 (under a different title) as part of ATSIC's predecessor, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. OIW consults with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through a network of regional co-ordinators and through initiatives such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Conference held in 1992.

In a number of areas Commonwealth programs are being used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve positive results. For example, year 12 school retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have increased from 9 per cent in 1980 to 33 per cent in 1991. Higher education enrolments are up from 854 in 1982 to some 4800 in 1991. This has been achieved with assistance from the Commonwealth's ABSTUDY program. Similarly, Commonwealth health initiatives have contributed to a decline of more than 60 per cent in infant and maternal deaths over the past 20 years. The incidence of chronic trachoma has also decreased dramatically.

Despite these achievements Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still have the highest unemployment, worst health, lowest levels of education, housing and community services and the highest rates of arrest and imprisonment of any group in Australia. Nowhere has this picture been presented so clearly and completely as in the *Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, released in April 1991.

In March and June 1992 the Commonwealth announced a $400 million package of programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to run over five years. The package is designed to address the underlying causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage which the Royal Commission identified as the real source of the unacceptably high rates of Aboriginal arrest and imprisonment.

The package is based on the philosophy that Government programs should, where possible, help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities move out of situations of dependence. Programs are in the key areas of economic development, employment and training, youth and education, alcohol and drug abuse and legal services. The Government has strongly emphasised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women must get a fair share of the resources and opportunities provided.

As well as changes in programs and policies, the Royal Commission recognised that, to tackle Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, a change in attitudes was essential. A better relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australia is a prerequisite if we are to achieve reform and change. The establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1992 focuses public attention on the long-term, co-operative processes required to achieve real change in the position of Australia's indigenous people. The Council is a good example of indigenous people and non-indigenous Australians working together toward a common aim. Women have a key role in this process, and projects are being developed which will allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other women to link together, drawing on their common goals and the strengths of their varying experiences. Women comprise ten of the Council's 25 members with six being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Photo courtesy of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) *1993 Black Women's Calendar.*

Margaret Valadian, first graduate under the Aboriginal Scholarship Scheme.

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Photo courtesy of the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services

Dr Edith Weisberg, Commonwealth Spokesperson on Prevention of Cervical Cancer, with *Screening for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer*, a handbook for doctors launched by the Hon Brian Howe, Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services.

Health and Well-Being 12

Achievements So Far

In 1984, **Medicare was introduced**, providing all Australians with access to affordable, high quality health care.

In 1989-90, the **National Women's Health Program** was established and allocated some $17 million in Commonwealth funds for the four years to 1992-93. Total Commonwealth-State funding for the program is $33.72 million.

In 1989-90, the **Alternative Birthing Services Program** was established providing $6.44 million in unmatched Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories over four years for the establishment of midwife-managed maternity services which provide an alternative to traditional labour-ward services.

The Government in 1990 committed $64 million for a **National Program for the Early Detection of Breast Cancer**.

In 1991-92 a total of 95 000 women nationally were screened for **breast cancer** under the program.

'Women want to live healthy, active lives.'

Women in the 1990s are increasingly conscious of their special health needs.

We want access to an affordable health system which meets our changing needs at every stage of our lives — as young women, as child-bearers, as carers, and as we age.

We often have responsibility for the health needs of our children and older relatives, and we want a system which doesn't stop us going to the doctor because of the cost.

Women know that good health is more than simply the absence of illness, and that our well-being is affected by a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors. We want to live and work in safe environments. And we want to be given enough information to be able to make choices about health and health care for ourselves and our families.

We want a greater role in decision making about health services and research, as both consumers and providers. We want more research into child-birth, post-natal depression, menopause, breast and cervical cancer and osteoporosis.

And we want to exercise our rights as users of health services. This includes full

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In 1992, the Government allocated $23.4 million over 4 years for a **cervical cancer screening** program.

respect for our dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy, and for decisions about our care and the quality of our lives.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Give every attention to the recommendations of the national evaluation of the National Women's Health Program which is expected to report early in 1993.
- Monitor progress in achieving specific health goals and targets for women as part of the process of developing and monitoring National Health Goals and Targets.
- Encourage primary health care services which particularly target women in high risk groups and disadvantaged women and which address the seven priority health areas of the National Women's Health Program.
- Develop a women's health strategy for all areas of activity of the National Health and Medical Research Council.
- Provide a fair share of grants for research into women's health issues and ensure that women are involved in defining the research questions and methods to be used.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in information currently collected on women's health, and develop a co-ordinated plan of action to improve the national information data base for future planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes.
- Work towards the development of appropriate and readily available information and educational materials on women's health for women of varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
- Continue to provide funding under the National Family Planning Program to selected non-government organisations for a comprehensive range of educational, clinical and counselling services on family planning and sexual and reproductive health, as well as professional training and research.
- Monitor the Australian health system reform measures to ensure that the special needs of women are accommodated, and that the objectives of the National Women's Health Policy are promoted.
- Aim to provide a mix of obstetric services including midwife-managed services outside the traditional labour ward setting.

- Develop improved continuing education courses in women's health for medical practitioners, nurses and other health practitioners and teachers.
- Encourage an increase in the numbers of women in senior medical and health administration positions.
- Ensure the training of women doctors takes account of their family responsibilities.
- Establish mechanisms which set and maintain high quality standards in the delivery of breast cancer screening and assessment programs to ensure that the maximum number of small cancers are detected.
- Implement the endorsed Organised Approach to the prevention and management of cervical cancer.
- Provide treatment services for women with drug and alcohol dependence which recognise their needs and responsibilities.
- Continue to enhance programs aimed at the reduction of drug abuse so that they adequately educate women and target areas of drug dependence of particular relevance to women.
- Develop strategies to assist the access to appropriate health services of women facing linguistic, cultural and socio-economic barriers.
- Undertake further monitoring of the health status of rural women and raise awareness of the results among key decision makers and the community at large.
- Improve the mental health of women, through the National Mental Health Policy and Plan. The aim of the policy is, for all Australians, to promote mental health, improve the quality of and access to mental health services, and enhance the rights of those with mental illness within a framework of community care, rather than institutional care.
- Ensure access of older women to appropriate quality health services and ensure their rights in the health system are protected.
- Work towards the implementation of the Non-English Speaking Background Women's Health Strategy as developed in 1991 by the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues.

Progress So Far

Women are the most frequent users of health services, largely because they are over-represented in the aged population and because of their role as childbearers and carers for family members.

In 1983, Australia's health service systems were becoming increasingly unable to meet society's needs and to respond to necessary social and economic change.

With the introduction of Medicare in 1984, nearly two million people who previously had no health insurance (including many low-income earners) became eligible for health cover. Medicare is financed through the general taxation system and a specific Medicare Levy and provides rebates on the cost of medical services and optometrical consultations, free shared ward accommodation and in-patient and out-patient treatment at public hospitals for all Australian residents.

The 1992-93 changes to Medicare aim to improve public patient access to hospitals, reduce waiting times for elective surgery and to improve the quality and efficiency of the health care system.

The National Women's Health Program was launched in 1989. It grew from a proposal for a National Women's Health Policy at a National Women's Health Conference held in Adelaide in September 1985. The Government's commitment to developing a policy was announced shortly afterwards. Over one million women were consulted and a program was developed to match the needs that women expressed.

The program is cost-shared with the States and Territories on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis, bringing total funding to $33.72 million over the four years from 1989-90 to 1992-93. It aims to improve primary health care for women in Australia, particularly those most at risk, and to encourage the health system to be more responsive to women's needs. This is done mainly by funding community-based organisations to establish projects which address the seven priority health issues identified by women in the National Women's Health Policy. These are reproductive health and sexuality, the health of ageing women, emotional and mental health, violence against women, occupational health and safety, the health needs of women as carers and the health effects of sex-role stereotyping on women.

In line with other health promotion programs, the National Women's Health Program aims to influence other services beyond clinical and curative services towards health promotion and illness prevention.

The program is now in its fourth year of operation and is currently being evaluated. Consultation with women's health service providers and users on the program's effectiveness will be an important aspect of the evaluation, as will issues raised by the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues. Continued funding of the Program will be considered in the 1993-94 Budget context.

The Women's Health Program has provided an important source of funding for women's health services. Many people who use these services have been victims of violence. The role played by women's health centres and health services in meeting the needs of these women was acknowledged by Sir Ronald Wilson (President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) when handing down his determination in the recent challenge, under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, to women's health centres and services in the Australian Capital Territory.

The Early Detection of Breast Cancer Program, the Cervical Cancer Screening Program and the Alternative Birthing Services Program are other women's programs funded separately from the National Women's Health Program. Other programs affecting women include Health Research, the Therapeutic Goods Program which considers whether goods and drugs related to women's health have been tested for safety and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. In addition the National AIDS Strategy includes women as a target group.

Another development since the launching of the National Women's Health Policy has been the National Mental Health Policy which was published in April 1992 by the Commonwealth and State Health Ministers and which is supported by a Commonwealth contribution of $135 million over six years. The Policy recognises that women in the community have special needs, and services must be planned and delivered in ways that are sensitive to women's needs and expectations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have access to all health programs. However the life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is 14 years less than other Australian women. The health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is severely affected during pregnancy often resulting in high risk pregnancies and lower birth weight babies, and infant morbidity and mortality remains much higher than that of the rest of the population. To help overcome these problems the Commonwealth Government will contribute up to $232 million over the period to 1995 to the National Aboriginal Health Strategy. (Information about Health Services specifically for indigenous people is in the chapter on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.)

Part of the Office of the Status of Women's *Working Families: Sharing the Load* Education Program.

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Achievements So Far

Since January 1993, social security child-related payments have gone to the **primary caregivers** — usually the mother.

Some 241 241 low-income families received **Family Allowance and Family Allowance Supplement** in 1992 — 98.7 per cent of recipients were women.

From March 1983 to September 1992, the maximum combined **Family Allowance and Family Allowance Supplement** increased in real terms by over 50 per cent for a child under 13 and doubled for a child aged 13 to 15.

The **Child Support Scheme** was introduced in 1988.

The number of families receiving **Child Disability Allowance** from 1982 to 1992 jumped from 27 045 to 50 797 — the allowance was restored to its 1987 real value and is indexed.

The **Carer's Package** was announced in the 1992-93 Budget providing $92 million over four years.

The Government ratified the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156, **Workers with Family Responsibilities**, in March 1990.

'Women want to live harmoniously in families where the caring and household work is shared fairly among family members.'

Women want to live in peace with other members of their families. Women have changed a lot over the last 20 years. We've become freer and more independent but there is no question that, in the 1990s, we will continue to want to be a part of families which give us the support and warmth we need.

Women's commitment and contribution to their families is undoubted but women want the load shared more fairly and their work valued. Women also want accelerated the trend towards fathers taking and welcoming a shared role in family life.

About 70 per cent of the unpaid work done in the home is carried out by women. When a women also works in the paid workforce, her contribution at home actually remains constant at an average 36 hours per week.

Women want the community, workplaces and governments to support families in a range of ways, including through:

- continuing financial support to families with children;
- more child care;
- continuing and increasing help for those caring for other family members who are elderly or have disabilities; and

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- more flexible working conditions so that workers with family responsibilities can do both jobs well.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Support the five-yearly collection and publication of statistical and other data which assesses the amount and distribution and value of unpaid work in the home, care for extended-family members and of voluntary community work.
- Encourage a review of international standards of data collection to enable unpaid work to be counted on a regular basis in international accounting systems.
- Support the United Nations proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family and ensure that women are considered under the theme of the year, 'Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world'.
- Continue consultations with State and Territory Governments, non-government organisations (NGOs) and professional groups in developing Australia's national program of action for implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children.
- Ensure that Government policies, programs and services are appropriate for women, and that service delivery is effective, particularly for isolated women and special needs groups.
- Ensure that Government consultation and information processes include women working full-time in the home, including through community organisations, in both metropolitan and rural areas.
- Continue to increase support systems for full- and part-time carers of people with a disability, the young and frail elderly.
- Continue to promote and support parent education, family support and marriage counselling services.
- Give attention to the health issues of women, including their occupational health and safety needs, through the implementation of the National Women's Health Policy.
- Provide better housing choices for women and their families by implementing urban reform strategies, better planning and house design and increasing public housing, rent assistance and crisis accommodation.

- Implement the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156 to enable workers with family responsibilities to be employed without discrimination and, as far as possible, without conflict with their family responsibilities.

- In implementing ILO Convention No. 156, promote flexible working arrangements including: a range of working hours, permanent part-time and job sharing arrangements with access to superannuation, long-service leave, sick leave and employer-sponsored child care.

- Promote the importance of leisure activities, recreation and sport as activities which can improve self-esteem and fitness and reduce the isolation of women.

- Encourage the media to portray women more realistically in the home environment.

Progress So Far

Australian families have changed markedly over recent decades.

Australian families now come in all shapes and sizes. There are dual-income families, stay-at-home mothers and/or fathers, single-breadwinner families, extended families and blended families related by marriage or relationship.

With all the changes, Australia continues to be a very family-oriented nation. Family members support each other through extensive family networks.

Improved educational opportunities for girls have opened up new choices in employment, and more and more women are entering and remaining in the workforce. Less and less often does the family economy depend solely upon a single breadwinner. Increasingly incomes are being pooled by family members. Families are smaller as couples are deciding to have fewer children, and to have them later in life. And roles in families are changing as women manage both their careers and their homes, and as men begin to take a more active role in parenting, as carers for relatives and assume increasing domestic responsibilities.

The Government seeks to support families in a range of ways so that family members can lead productive and fulfilling lives, and are able to exercise their rights and determine the shape of their lives.

Over the past ten years the Government has worked systematically towards this through a range of initiatives.

Low-Income Families

One of the Government's most significant set of initiatives has been aimed at improving the position of low-income families with children.

Assistance for families was extended in 1983 by the introduction of Family Income Supplement (FIS) for low-income families not in receipt of a pension or benefit. This measure ensured that low-income working families were no worse off than families on unemployment benefits.

In 1986, the Government embarked upon a fundamental review of the social security system, headed by Professor Bettina Cass. The review led to a major reform of the social security system which greatly benefits many families.

In December 1987, the Family Income Supplement directed to low income families was replaced by the Family Allowance Supplement (FAS), and payments were increased, with a higher rate for older children. Rent assistance was also extended to low-income families and has increased (for a one-to-two child family) by 111 per cent. Families in receipt of full rate FAS also became eligible for subsidised health care.

Over the nine years to June 1992, payments for low-income families have substantially increased in real terms. For example, payments for children (combined Family Allowance and Allowance Supplement or equivalent benefit) have increased between March 1983 and September 1992 in real terms by over 50 per cent for a child under 13 and 100 per cent for a child aged 13 to 15.

Family Allowances

Family allowances have been progressively targeted. In 1987, a general income test was applied to family allowance and an assets test was introduced in January 1992. Since January 1990 family allowances and virtually all other child provisions in the tax and social security systems have been indexed to maintain their real value.

Since January 1993 Family Payment recipients have been able to request a lump sum advance up to half the first-child rate for up to six months.

New Family Payment System

From 1 January 1993, Social Security child payments and Rent Assistance for families with children have been combined into a single payment called Family Payment. This has simplified the current range of family payments and improved assistance to those most in need. A greater proportion of income support is directed to the primary carer of children, usually the mother. Work incentives for families will be improved by better awareness of the Family Payment by low-income working families. Guardian Allowance has been extended to low-income sole parents in employment.

Sole Parent Families

In 1991, some 9 per cent of all families were sole parents. In 87 per cent of those cases, the parent was a women. About 44 per cent of sole parents with dependants are employed outside the home.

The Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program which is designed to help return sole parents to the workforce has been extended and improved at a cost of some $3 million in 1992-93 and a total of $14.6 million over the following three years.

Child Support Scheme

The scheme is based on the principle of ongoing joint parental responsibility for children. It was introduced in 1988 to address widespread non-payment and low levels of child support by non-custodial parents.

The 1992-93 Budget includes new arrangements to reduce the delay between time of payment of child support to the Child Support Agency and the distribution of those payments to custodial parents.

Family Services

In the 1990-91 Budget, the Government allocated an additional $15 million across all family services programs for family resource centres, to be distributed over the three years to 1992-93. Total funding for the family services program in 1991-92 was $16.7 million.

During 1991-92, approved marriage counselling organisations received financial assistance totalling $12.1 million, an increase of 24.2 per cent over the 1990-91 funding level. Thirteen family mediation centres received $1.4 million to provide counselling assistance designed to help settle matters in the Family Court.

Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families

The Support Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parents (SNAP) program aims to improve access to Government services for Aboriginal parents, especially mothers. SNAP will receive additional funding of $0.7 million over 1992-93 and $2.9 million in the following three years.

International Year of the Family, 1994

In the 1992-93 Budget, funding of $1.85 million was made available for initial planning of Australia's involvement in the United Nations' International Year of the Family (IYF).

During IYF the Government plans to further work on the problems facing families, including the difficulties of reconciling work and family responsibilities, and look at the most effective way of dealing with them. IYF also provides an opportunity to build community support and understanding of the many different types of families and family needs.

The central theme of IYF 'Family - the smallest democracy at the heart of society' articulates the objectives of the year, particularly the need for families to respect the rights of individual women and educate children about the new balance in relationships in families.

Working Families

Changes in women's lives are leading to changes in families. An example of these changes can be seen in research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies which indicates that between 1981 and 1991 there was a change in the attitudes and behaviour of men in families towards accepting more responsibility at home, especially for children.

In recognition of changes in families the Government has introduced a range of measures which includes ratification in 1991 of the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities. ILO Convention No. 156 commits Australia and other ratifying countries to work towards enabling workers with family responsibilities to be employed without discrimination and, as far as possible, without conflict with their family responsibilities.

On ratification of ILO Convention No. 156, the Work and Family Unit was established in the Department of Industrial Relations. The Unit is responsible for assisting the Government to implement the Convention, providing policy advice on work and family matters and working with and encouraging employers, unions and State and Territory Governments to address work and family issues.

In the context of implementing the Convention, the Office of the Status of Women has undertaken a three-year Working Families community education program to change attitudes and behaviour towards women's unfair double load of work and family responsibilities. The research underpinning this program highlights the scope and importance of the work undertaken by women in the home, and the skills they use. The program also recognises that all families are working families, and that women need recognition and support in all their roles.

Employers are beginning to develop family friendly workplaces. They are responding to Government measures to encourage them to sponsor child care places for their employees. They are exploring flexible work arrangements and other measures which improve conditions for workers with family responsibilities.

The 1992-93 Budget provided additional funds to the Work and Family Unit of $500 000 in 1992-93 and a total of $675 000 in 1993-94 for a grants and research program to encourage best practice in employment conditions for workers with family responsibilities.

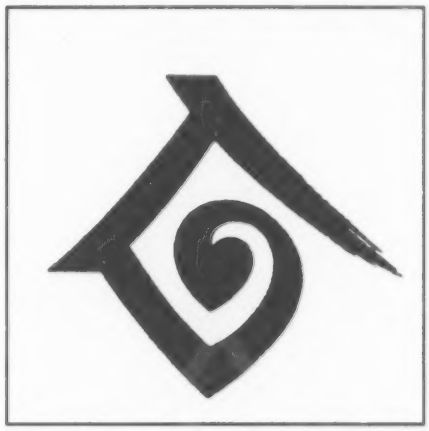
Another measure introduced by the Commonwealth Government focuses on caring for other family members. As well as providing extensive child care the Government seeks to support families caring for relatives with disabilities and the frail elderly. The

Women and Families

1992 Budget included a $92 million package of increased assistance and support for carers over four years. The package is designed to provide recognition for the role of the carer.

Many carers are women who dedicate huge amounts of their time and energy caring for their relatives.

A range of further measures supporting families are detailed in other chapters. See Homes and Communities, Income Security, Eliminating Violence Against Women, Women in the Media, Child Care and Health and Well Being.



International Year of the Family Logo

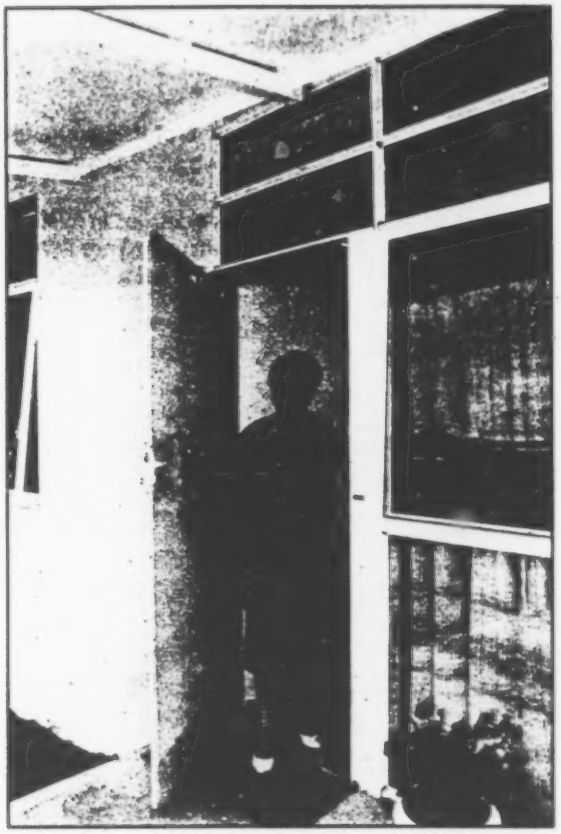


Photo courtesy of the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services

Older women are major users of public housing.

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Homes and Communities 14

Achievements So Far

Between 1983 and 1992, the number of **households in public housing** funded under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) increased from about 245 000 to over 360 000. Single women and sole parents make up about one-third of all public tenants.

In 1992 the Government committed itself to providing $4 billion in CSHA funding over four years **increasing the number of public dwellings** to over 400 000.

Since 1983, the level of **rent assistance has substantially increased.** Women make up over 57 per cent of those receiving rent assistance.

In 1992, improvements to **Rent Assistance** meant that about 440 000 single renters and sole parents will get more assistance.

Some **374 services for women** were funded in 1991 under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

'Every woman wants
a place to call home,
a place to belong,
a place to call her own.'

Shelter is a basic human right. But women want more than shelter. They want homes where they can settle and stay put as long as they like.

Whether they are owners or renters, women want their homes to be safe and affordable. Women want to feel in control and to be able to shape their own space. They want the freedom to decide what colour to paint the walls and what plants to put in the garden. They want safe places for their children to play.

Almost half of Australian women are in the workforce. So when they apply for loans, they want to be taken more seriously by banks, and want loans that are tailored to their needs. Women want to be treated fairly and with dignity by landlords and agents, and to have their rights as tenants respected.

Where we live can shape the quality of our lives. Not everybody has the same needs, and people's needs change over time. Women want to be able to choose where and how they live, and who they live with. They need more choice in the type, size and location of their homes. They want their homes to be well designed and environmentally friendly. And as they age, women want services that let them stay in their homes and communities.

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Between 1983 and 1992, the number of **women enrolled in architecture and building studies** in higher education rose from 1610 to 4085 — a rise from 21 per cent to 34.3 per cent.

Women want their communities to be good places to live. They want to stay close to families and friends. They want good public transport that is frequent, safe and affordable. They want towns and cities that are well designed so that they can feel safer when they go out at night, and so that older women and women with disabilities can share in the life of the community. They want schools and parks for their children, neighbourhood centres, education and health services, jobs and shops that are close at hand.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Work towards improving the provision of housing information including that specifically relevant to the needs of women.
- Ensure that information on housing needs and access to housing collected by governments is gender disaggregated.
- Monitor women's access to affordable and appropriate housing in all areas of Australia, in particular the impact of private rents on low income women and families, and on special needs groups.
- Continue to investigate ways to improve the security of tenure within the private rental market.
- Work towards making subsidies such as rent assistance more closely related to actual housing costs.
- Continue to encourage new forms of public housing through co-operatives and other types of community managed housing through such initiatives as the Community Housing Program.
- Through the new Community Housing Program, improve housing and support services for older people, the majority of whom are women, so that they can maintain their independence.
- Continue to provide general public funding and crisis housing and associated support services.

- Continue to expand the supply of public rental housing in order to reduce the financial burden facing low income earners in the private rental market.
- Continue to promote better co-ordination of housing and support services which target women with special needs.
- Continue to monitor and evaluate the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA) to ensure that the objectives of the Agreement are being met.
- Promote refinancing schemes for older people such as Home Equity Conversion loans.
- Encourage women architects and planners to become involved in the design of housing.
- Continue to encourage innovative urban design through demonstration projects and reform of planning regulations.
- Continue to support a public equity component in shared home ownership programs.
- Encourage banks and credit unions to develop training programs for their staff to ensure corporate policies are implemented and that women receive equitable access to housing finance.

Progress So Far

The Government's Housing Policy recognises the importance of affordable and appropriate housing for all Australians. Housing costs have a significant impact on the quality of life of both tenants and home owners. At the same time, where people live can affect access to transport, jobs and vital services such as hospitals and schools.

Policy Directions in Housing

Women and households headed by women account for a disproportionate number of those who lack appropriate housing or are struggling financially after paying their housing costs. Single parent families and older people renting in the private market are among those likely to be facing housing difficulties. Women are the majority in both groups.

Specific focus on women's housing needs really began with the first National Women's Housing Conference in 1985. The Women's Housing Issues Working Party was also established in 1985. It meets regularly and reports to the Commonwealth-State-Territory Housing Ministers on issues of importance to women. Priorities include input into policy initiatives such as the National Housing Strategy (discussed below), housing for domestic violence victims, and access for low-income women to housing.

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One of the major tasks the United Nations put to its member states during the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987) was to review the nature and extent of housing need. Another task was to review the adequacy of existing national housing policies, making recommendations that would solve the major problems by the year 2000.

The National Housing Strategy (NHS) was established in June 1990, as part of the Commonwealth Government's Social Justice Strategy, to undertake the first comprehensive examination of Australia's housing needs and housing policy since the Commonwealth Housing Commission Report of 1944. Since its formation, the Strategy has been developing a comprehensive program of housing policy reform to meet the needs of all Australians, particularly those on low to moderate incomes. The Strategy has been identifying the issues and developing a set of policy options to improve the provision of housing to meet the special needs of women and children, and to improve the links between housing, employment and services.

In September 1991, the NHS released the discussion paper *The Housing Needs of Women and Children*. The discussion paper formed the basis for extensive community consultation throughout Australia, conducted by the National Women's Consultative Council in conjunction with the National Women's Housing Caucus. The responses of these community consultations are being incorporated in policy options developed by the NHS.

Government Housing Assistance

All levels of government in Australia have important responsibilities for housing.

The Commonwealth influences housing through its broad economic and taxation policies, as well as by direct expenditure on housing assistance programs. State and local governments are involved in providing housing services, and in planning, regulation and approval processes.

The Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA), is the Commonwealth Government's major housing program, and low-income households have received assistance under a series of such Agreements since 1945. Under the Agreement, the Commonwealth provides funds to the States and Territories for public housing and home purchase assistance.

Although only some 6 per cent of Australian households live in public housing, it is a very important source of assistance for low-income women. Single women and sole parents together make up a third of the public housing population, and women in low-income families make up a significant proportion of the remainder.

As a result of the Housing Review of 1988, the CSHA was renegotiated in 1989. The main objectives underlying the 1989 CSHA are to alleviate housing-related poverty, to secure affordable housing for everyone in Australia, and to ensure that assistance is provided equitably to people in all housing sectors.

Over the last ten years, Commonwealth funding for public housing under the CSHA has almost doubled. Between 1983 and 1992, the Federal Government provided total funding of $7077 million. Public housing is allocated on the basis of need, with priority or 'out of turn' housing available to people in crisis situations. Each year some 50 000 people are newly accommodated in public housing, representing a total of some 370 000 households in 1992. However, some 203 000 households still remain on public housing waiting lists.

As part of the 1992-93 Budget, the Commonwealth Government will offer to the States-Territories through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA), more than $4 billion over the next four years, with a view to increasing public housing units to 400 000 by 1996. As major clients of public housing, women will benefit significantly from this expansion.

A new Community Housing Program (CHP) is being established to develop a broader and more viable community housing sector. Under the Program the Government will more than double its commitment to community housing to $48 million in 1992-93 increasing to $64 million in 1995-96. With support from the States, Territories and local government, the community sector should comprise 25 000 dwellings by the year 2000.

Housing funded under the CHP will be community- and tenant-managed and will allow women to have a say on how their housing is managed. It will provide many women, including older single women and younger sole parents with a wider range of housing choices tailored to individual needs. Additional funding is also being provided for housing and support options for older people, the majority of whom are women, and for others with special needs.

The 1992-93 Budget also announced a new Social Housing Subsidy Program which will support shared equity schemes for low and moderate income earners. In such schemes dwellings are part-owned by the resident and part-owned by the landlord or housing authority. They provide an innovative means of assisting lower income earners to enjoy some of the benefits of home ownership, even though full ownership may not be initially possible. The program will commence in 1993-94. Women are expected to be the majority of those assisted though this initiative.

Supported Accommodation

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) provides recurrent funds for community groups and local government to provide crisis accommodation and support services for homeless persons. (The Crisis Accommodation Program, which is part of the CSHA, provides capital funding.) Services include shelters, refuges, halfway houses and hostel accommodation. The support provided can include counselling, advocacy, referral, and training. SAAP is discussed in detail in 'Eliminating Violence Against Women'.

Rent Assistance

The NHS identified two groups as suffering severe affordability problems in the private rental market, sole parents and single people over the age of 65; women make up the majority of both groups.

The Government's goal by the year 2000 is to ensure that low-income households do not face unaffordable rents. As a first step, reform of rent assistance payments has been undertaken to provide more adequate and better targeted assistance. About 440 000 single renters and sole parents will get more assistance, and in particular, the number of people paying over 30 per cent of their income in rent will fall by more than 20 per cent or 68 000. The changes will particularly assist women who make up about 60 per cent of rent assistance recipients.

Urban Reform

The NHS has identified the need for reform in urban planning and service delivery to ensure that Australia's cities and towns remain pleasant places to live. The Government has developed a program of urban reform and development which promotes access to secure and affordable housing that is best suited to people's needs over their lifetime. This means, among other things, providing people with much greater choice in the type, size and location of housing. Such reform will be of significant benefit to women, particularly women with young families and sole parents who are often isolated on the urban fringes without good access to employment, transport or child care.

The Building Better Cities (BBC) and the National Urban Development Program (NUDP) are two recent Commonwealth Government initiatives in the urban reform area.

The BBC Program, which was announced in the 1991 Budget, provides $816 million over five years to the States and Territories to encourage better urban planning and management by all spheres of Government.

NUDP, which was announced in the 1992 Budget, is a largely Commonwealth-funded initiative to improve efficiency in the provision and use of housing, land and infrastructure and the design of our urban environments while also promoting affordability, equity and environmental sustainability. The program will encompass and build on a number of urban reform initiatives including those funded under the Housing Industry Development Program.

Achievements So Far

Under the Government's Rural Access Program, $500 000 a year is devoted specifically to **assist community programs** for women.

Since 1986 the **Rural Counselling Program** has assisted some 8500 families. In 1992, 13 of the 61 counsellors were women.

During 1991-92 an average of 175 callers a day, more than half of them women, used the **COUNTRYLINK Answer line**.

Under the Home and Community Care Program, a **toll-free telephone counselling service** was available to isolated carers.

In 1992, the Commonwealth committed $300 million over three years to improve selected **rural highways.**

'Women in the country want choices and opportunities like their town and city sisters.'

Women know that transport and communications are vital to life in the country.

We want cheap and reliable telecommunications systems.

We want more and better roads so that we can get to work or use local services, or simply visit friends and family more easily.

Rural women want better public transport so that their kids can get to school, and so that older women and others who can't drive can get out and about.

Rural women want to play a part in decision making at all levels, and to be asked about the services they need.

Like their city sisters, women in the country want housing that is affordable, safe and secure. We want the best possible education for their children and ourselves. We want easy access to things like child care and health services.

Privacy is an important issue in small communities, and women in the country want confidentiality when we visit a health centre or talk to a counsellor.

Rural women need time to themselves, and opportunities for sport, recreation and hobbies.

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Women living in rural and remote areas are a target group under the **National Women's Health Program** — a range of innovative and appropriate services is being implemented across all States.

Rural women who experience violence need emergency accommodation and support services just like women in cities.

As they age, women in rural and remote areas want support services that will let them stay in their own communities amid family and friends. Country women who are caring for older or disabled relatives need access to 'time out', through respite care for their relatives.

Women want greater recognition for their work on the land and in rural communities.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Try out new ways of providing suitable services and involve women in this process.
- Expand the body of research and data on rural and remote area women.
- Strengthen support services available to such women and maintain the infrastructure and essential services upon which they rely.
- Promote rural and remote area women's access to current and potential use of different types of technology including distance learning. This is particularly critical for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Implement a national network of teleservice centres with the new funding provided in the 1992-93 Budget, to provide improved access to social and community services.
- Promote the creation of multi-purpose health services in communities too small or remote to support a range of separate, stand-alone services.
- Provide the basis for country women and girls to have appropriate education, employment and training opportunities.
- Take into account the needs of rural communities when developing new communication technologies.
- Ensure adequate access to income support for rural and remote area women facing hardship and poverty.
- Develop appropriate support for regional development on the basis of the self-help approach.

- Ensure that programs, such as violence against women, include special components for rural, isolated and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Continue to support assistance to rural and remote communities through mechanisms such as the Rural Access Program and the Rural Adjustment Scheme.
- Make English language training available to women in isolated and remote areas who cannot attend formal classes.

Progress So Far

Since 1983 the Government has greatly expanded the range of community services provided in rural and remote Australia.

In 1986 a survey of women in rural Australia was conducted. The report of the survey, *Life Has Never Been Easy*, was published in 1988. Fourteen thousand women responded to the survey and almost one-third thought that the remoteness of rural living, and the challenges that this brought, were the biggest problems facing them. Other problems included being single parents, stress, lack of control over children, fear of vandalism and domestic violence. The findings were incorporated into the first National Agenda for Women. Women also had input into a Rural Symposium organised at Albury in 1987 and a meeting on 'The Way Ahead for Rural Service Delivery' held at Warrnambool in 1989.

Following the survey several programs were introduced to improve the lives of rural women. A Women's Health Services Rural Program was established in 1989 to assist women in remote areas. A Rural Counselling Program was established in 1986 to assist farmers in financial difficulty. Since then counsellors have assisted nearly 9000 farm families.

The COUNTRYLINK program was introduced in 1988. This is used for fast and accurate answering of queries over the phone and at displays. The *Rural Book*, now in its third edition, is a 200-page free publication compiled by COUNTRYLINK which gives brief information on Commonwealth Government services and programs available to rural people.

Rural women have had access to the Royal Flying Doctor Service for health care for many years. The Commonwealth also pays for the cost of contents and replacements for a medical chest which is provided to people in radio or telephone contact with the Service.

Financial assistance for travel to receive medical treatment is available. The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Scheme was altered in 1987 so that Commonwealth funds are paid to States and Territories for them to establish programs.

There are many general health programs to which rural and isolated women have access. One of these is the National Program for the Early Detection of Breast Cancer which aims to target all women, regardless of location, for whom mammographic screening is most likely to be beneficial. Mobile mammography units were made

available previously to provide services to women in rural and remote areas and these will continue in the new program. Another is the recently launched program for Prevention of Cervical Cancer.

Women will also benefit from the Rural Incentives Package, announced in the 1992-93 Budget, which focuses on improving access to general practitioners (GPs) in rural areas. This package, with funding of $8 million in 1992-93 and $15.2 million indexed thereafter, will encourage urban GPs to relocate to rural areas and will also provide additional support for those GPs who have already made a commitment to rural practice.

Other services include the National Acoustic Laboratories which provides a hearing service through a range of country-based Hearing Centres and visiting centres across Australia, and the National Strategy on Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) which commenced in 1989.

The 1989-90 Budget also provided for the development of multi-purpose centres in small rural communities. This program allows the co-location of hospital, nursing home, hostel and community care services in communities where provision of separate services would not be viable. There are currently 31 centres.

The Rural Access Program, which assists people in rural and remote Australia to develop and improve their own community's access to services and opportunities, includes a component of $500 000 a year which is devoted to assisting community programs for women. This component began in 1986.

The Business Advice for Rural Areas Program, which commenced in 1991-92, gives grants of up to $50 000 to rural and remote communities to employ business facilitators. This will help create new job and business opportunities and increase the strength and diversity of local economies. The program will benefit the growing number of women opening small businesses in rural areas.

The Rural Youth Information Service Grants Program has projects in 23 rural and isolated areas throughout Australia. The program provides activities and programs specifically targeted at young women.

The Government has made a commitment to improving access to education and training for rural people of all ages. Educational assistance for isolated children was substantially increased in 1992. Rural schools receive assistance through the Disadvantaged Schools Program and the Education Centres Program. Mobile services also travel in rural and remote communities to provide extra services for children. Learning opportunities for women in rural and remote areas have been enhanced by the establishment of eight Distance Education Centres within higher education institutions. The Government has also initiated an Open Learning program to widen access to higher education through the use of television and independent learning materials. It is particularly suited to the needs of rural and remote communities as students can study at their own pace and complete their degree entirely through open learning or transfer later to on-campus study.

A new farm safety group, Farmsafe Australia, has been formed to improve the health, safety, well-being and productivity of those involved in agriculture. The new body will have a national focus, with representation from the Country Women's Association, the National Farmer's Federation, the Australian Workers' Union, the Department of Primary Industries, Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland. Research by Worksafe Australia has shown farms to be amongst the nation's most dangerous workplaces.

Family support provisions have been changed to recognise the asset rich/income poor situation of many farm families in the current rural recession.

Sport and recreation for women in the country receive assistance through the Community Recreation and Sports Facilities Program. *You Can Beat the Country Blues* and *Doing it for Ourselves — a Rural Woman's Guide to Fitness and Well-Being* were released in 1990 by the then Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories and Tourism. Artistic and cultural life is fostered through the Australia Council funds and the Australian National Gallery's Travelling Exhibition Program.

The Government has recognised that more attention needed to be paid to the particular problems and circumstances of northern Australians. This decision was based on a recognition of the unique combination of geographic, demographic, climatic and economic factors of north Australia and the implications these have for northern Australians and the provision of services to them. In its 1991-92 Social Justice Budget Statement, the Government announced its decision to establish a Taskforce to develop a North Australia Social Justice Strategy (NASJS).

The overall aim of the NASJS is to ensure the better delivery of needed services for northern Australians. In the 1992-93 Budget it was agreed that the base tax zone rebates would be increased by 25 per cent for all recipients and that the increase would be similarly applied to Social Security Remote Area Allowances. This increase will be applied from 1 January 1993 and is a clear acknowledgement of the Government's awareness of costs faced by northern Australians in getting access to needed services.

Photo courtesy of the Courier Mail

Margaret Cover,
Western Zone President
of the Queensland
Graingrowers' Association
working on her property
at Meandarra in
Western Queensland.

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Achievements So Far

Between 1983 and 1992, the Government raised the **standard pension rate** from 22.7 per cent of male average weekly earnings to over 25 per cent.

From March 1983 to September 1992, maximum combined **Family Allowance and Family Allowance Supplement** increased in real terms by 50 per cent for a child under 13 and doubled for a child aged 13 to 15.

All **payments for children** are now indexed to maintain their real value.

The **Child Support Scheme** was introduced in 1988 and achieved substantial increases in financial support paid to custodial parents for their children.

Since 1983, **sole parent pensioners** with two children receive a real increase in social security payments of over 30 per cent and **age pensioners** received a real increase of over 15 per cent.

'Ultimately dignity and choice for women require financial security.'

There is nothing more important to women's well-being and security than being able to pay for the necessities of life.

Women want financial security. It is the key to our ability to make choices about how we will live our lives.

Our ability to achieve financial security depends on our access to jobs and training, equal pay, a fair division of family responsibilities and access to superannuation and social security payments.

Women want a fair and progressive tax system.

We need a social security system which provides adequate income for those who are retired, unable to work or who are looking for work.

Women, particularly women on low incomes, also need help with the costs of raising their children. Sole parents raising children need the assurance of regular and adequate payments of child support.

Whenever possible women want opportunities to achieve financial independence.

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Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Improve women's access to education, training and employment, including those women dependent on social security support, through flexible and innovative strategies designed to meet their needs.
- Provide adequate income support to those dependent on the social security system and in particular maintain the standard rate of pension at 25 per cent at least of average weekly earnings.
- Maintain the real value of child payments, in particular through maintaining established benchmarks which set Additional Family Payment at a percentage of pension rates.
- Ensure that, wherever possible, Family Payments is directed to the person who primarily cares for the child — usually the mother.
- Continue to build on the improved levels of support achieved through the Child Support Scheme.
- Assist age pensioners and others with strategies to maximise their private incomes.
- Monitor women's participation in superannuation and the adequacy of superannuation through the Superannuation Guarantee Charge.
- Improve linkages between income support and other support services for carers of the aged and disabled, including addressing their labour market needs.
- Continue to build on the Disability Reform Package initiatives, including identifying measures which target the specific income support and labour market needs of women with a disability.
- Ensure access to social security services for clients who have English language difficulties or who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.
- Provide an efficient, courteous and good quality service to women dependent on the social security system.
- Ensure equitable treatment for women in the taxation system recognising that they form a large proportion of low- to middle-income earners, secondary earners in families and dependants.

Progress So Far

Over the last decade, there has been a fundamental shift in thinking about how to provide income security. For the first time policies on wages, superannuation, taxation, family support, employment and training and social security have been linked.

There have been tangible benefits for women as a result. The Jobs Education and Training (JET) program for sole parents is one example.

A major change is the move to an 'active society' model of income support where financial independence is encouraged wherever possible. This model grew out of the recommendations of the Social Security Review undertaken over three years from 1986. The Review also made strong recommendations on providing adequate levels of social security payments.

Since 1983, the Government has substantially increased income support payments and Department of Social Security (DSS) services, especially for women. All DSS programs affect women. Seventy-three per cent of all DSS clients are women. In particular, they are the vast majority of age and sole parent pensioners and recipients of child payments.

In 1992, over four million women received a pension or benefit and/or payments for children. Some 1.9 million of these women received a pension or benefit in their own right and another 224 000 as dependents of male recipients.

Some 1.9 million women received a payment for children through the Family Allowance, Family Allowance Supplement, Child Disability Allowance, Double Orphans Pension, or a combination of these benefits.

Some 69 per cent of age pensioners are women. The Government has maintained and at times exceeded its long-standing commitment to provide Age Pension at 25 per cent of Average Weekly Earnings. Since 1983, the value of the pension has increased in real terms by more than 14 per cent. The Government's retirement incomes policy ensures that those on pensions have opportunities to supplement their income and those still in the workforce are able to save more for their retirement.

Over two-thirds of all age and service pensioners are now free from tax liability following the decision to exempt full rate pensioners in July 1990. The pension income test free area is also now indexed to maintain its value.

Fringe benefits are to be extended to all pensioners and those long-term allowees and beneficiaries aged 60 or over from 1 April 1993, responding to the high value placed on these concessions which cover items such as telephone rental. All part pensioners will therefore receive the same entitlement to Commonwealth fringe benefits as full pensioners.

Pensioners, allowees and low-income families who rent in the private market have benefited from the significant real increases in rent assistance since 1983. Improve-

ments to the rent assistance system, announced in 1992 will target even greater assistance to those facing housing affordability problems.

A major and lasting social reform was the introduction of benchmarks of adequacy for child payments. The Government set these at 15 per cent of the married pension rate for children under 13 years and 20 per cent of the married pension rate for children aged 13 to 15. All child payments have been indexed since January 1990. The $3 increase from April 1992, announced in the Government's One Nation Statement, raised the family payment benchmarks to 16.2 per cent for children under 13 and 21.2 per cent for children between 13 and 15.

Assistance for families has been an area of strong focus over the last ten years. Of particular importance was the introduction, in 1987, of the Family Allowance Supplement providing significant assistance to low-income working families. Under the Family Allowance Supplement, payments were substantially increased with a higher rate of payment for older children. All payments for children have been made tax free.

Since 1 January 1993, Family Allowance, Family Allowance Supplement and additional payment for children previously paid with pensions, allowances and benefits have been replaced with the Family Payment. It also includes Rent Assistance for families with children and Guardian Allowances for sole parent families. The new system of integrated family payments will improve access to family payments for low-income working families.

The extension of Guardian Allowance to sole parents receiving additional Family Payment from January 1993 will assist working sole parents and improve incentives to work. In many families, the 1993 changes will also ensure that a much greater proportion of income support goes to the primary care giver — usually the mother.

Since January 1993, there has been provision for a lump sum advance of up to half the first child rate of the basic Family Payment for a six-month period. Families will now have the option to take up an advance if and when sudden financial needs arise, such as school uniforms, books etc. at the beginning of the education year.

As well as JET, another development of particular assistance for sole parents was the Child Support Scheme, introduced in 1988. The scheme ensured that custodial parents receive an adequate level of financial support for their children, on a regular basis and on time.

Before the introduction of the scheme, about 30 per cent of non-custodial parents paid child support for their children. Under the new scheme, the Child Support Agency's overall collection rate is about 70 per cent of liabilities.

The level of support has also increased. At June 1992, sole parent pensioners who had been granted a pension before the scheme commenced were declaring an average amount of child support of $43 a week, while those granted a pension since assessment of child support under the administrative formula was introduced in October 1989 were declaring an average of $63 per week. Other improvements announced in the 1992-93 Budget will ensure that child support payments are more timely.

Photo courtesy of the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services.

Financial security is of paramount importance to women and their families.

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Achievements We Share

Women's **superannuation coverage** almost doubled from 1988 to 1991 — from 36.5 per cent of women employees to 65.5 per cent.

Employment reforms from 1983 to 1992 increased the number of women in the paid workforce.

The introduction of the **3 per cent award superannuation** has significantly increased superannuation coverage for women, including part-time workers.

The **Superannuation Guarantee Charge** arrangements provide for a minimum prescribed level of employer superannuation support for most employees in 1992.

It is expected that, by the year 2002, almost all employees will have **employer superannuation support** of at least 9 per cent of earnings.

The blanket exemption for superannuation in the **Sex Discrimination Act** was replaced in 1991 with more limited exemptions.

'Women want independence. Most of us are income earners for most of our adult lives. We want a fair deal in superannuation.'

More women than ever before are in the paid workforce.

But most women will have some time at home or in part time work at some point in their lives. And our full-time wages are often lower than men's. So we need the security of superannuation even more than they do.

As a result of Government policies, over 65 per cent of women who are in jobs — even part-timers — now have some superannuation coverage. The number will increase markedly in the next year or two because of the Superannuation Guarantee Change.

We want the trend in superannuation schemes to continue.

More of us want continuity of superannuation when we change jobs. We need support to leave our money in the schemes between jobs. It's tempting, when we leave a job, to cash in a small amount and spend it on the children. It should at least be a simple process to keep it there.

And when we retire, we want arrangements to be simple enough to manage without having to call in experts.

Women deserve to live in expectation of a comfortable old age. We are enjoying our new independence, but those who have not had equal opportunities before will still need an

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adequate pension. It must be kept at a level we can live on, and the age when we can draw it must reflect the opportunities we have had for paid work.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Ensure increased superannuation support for female employees, especially those employed as casual and part-time workers, by:
  - gradually increasing the prescribed level of superannuation support under the Superannuation Guarantee to 9 per cent by the year 2002; and
  - supporting the inclusion in awards of the rates of contributions to superannuation funds required by the Superannuation Guarantee.
- Examine proposals for superannuation saving arrangements which recognise women's common working patterns of interrupted participation in paid employment, particularly ways of improving preservation and portability of benefits through the use of roll-over funds.
- Give early consideration to the proposal for reform in the Attorney-General's Department's Discussion Paper on the Treatment of Superannuation in Family Law.
- Keep under review the need for exemptions of superannuation funds and schemes from the Sex Discrimination Act. (Amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act which will limit the exemption in respect of superannuation begin on 25 June 1993.)

Progress So Far

Until recently, many women were excluded from superannuation because schemes were designed to fit a pattern of continuous full time employment. For a long time it was virtually impossible for people who left a job to retain any superannuation entitlement, and it was almost unheard of for part time workers to have access to superannuation.

Women also were not recognised as independent economic entities (although women have always been more likely than men to have sole charge of children and to live alone for some of their lives). Even when they were in the paid workforce, their income was often regarded as supplementary or incidental.

Superannuation

Most women in their old age were dependent on the age pension or on their husbands' superannuation. Of people who were dependent on the age pension, women were much more likely to have no other income, to live in rented accommodation, and to own no assets.

In November 1982, 30 per cent of employed women were covered by a superannuation scheme. By November 1991, over 65 per cent of employed women were covered.

This remarkable change is largely due to the introduction of award superannuation and a number of forward-thinking policy changes.

From 1986, the progressive implementation of award superannuation has been the most important means for accelerating the spread of superannuation throughout the workforce.

This has resulted in a huge improvement in coverage for women, and has assisted in extending superannuation to women whose participation in the labour force may be broken due to family commitments.

Recognising the need to allow women to change jobs without changing superannuation schemes, the Government has supported the use of multi-employer funds jointly controlled by equal numbers of representatives of employers and unions. These funds enhance labour mobility through ready portability of superannuation benefits. They are particularly beneficial to workers who change jobs frequently or experience periods of unpaid employment, such as women who take leave due to family responsibilities.

The Retirement Incomes Policy announced in the 1989 Budget included a number of features designed to encourage women to contribute to superannuation schemes. First, those in paid employment for as little as 10 hours per week were enabled to contribute to superannuation schemes. Second, those out of the paid work force for up to 2 years could continue to contribute to a superannuation fund.

Superannuation was exempted from the Sex Discrimination Act when it was first passed. The Act was amended in 1991 (honouring a commitment in the first National Agenda for Women) so that the blanket exemption for superannuation was replaced with more limited exemptions. While superannuation funds may still discriminate on the basis of actuarial differences between men and women, it is now unlawful for an employer not to provide *pro-rata* superannuation benefits for part-time employees.

From 1 July 1992, all employees earning $450 or more in a month must have superannuation provided by their employer, initially at the rate of 3 or 4 per cent, rising to nine per cent by the year 2002. There are penalties for employers who fail to meet their obligations.

The Government has also given a good deal of consideration to the way superannuation is treated in divorce settlements. In March 1992, the Attorney-General's Department released a Discussion Paper, *The Treatment of Superannuation in Family Law*, comprising a proposal for reform. The issues are complex, but the Government recognises that superannuation is usually a valuable joint matrimonial asset to which both parties have contributed directly or indirectly.

Despite considerable improvements in women's access to superannuation, past inequalities mean that for many years to come the vast majority of women will be dependent on the age pension. It is impossible to overstate the importance for women of the Government's commitment to adequate levels of age pension as the cornerstone of income in retirement.

Employees with Superannuation in Main Job*

* Estimates are for August of each year, except 1991 which is for July.
Refers to employees who are covered by superannuation by their current employer.
Source: Employment Benefits, Australia, ABS Cat. No. 6334.0.

Older Women 18

Achievements So Far

In 1992 the Government made a commitment to maintain pensions at 25 per cent of **average weekly earnings** — women are 69 per cent of all age pensioners.

Fringe Benefits will be extended from 1993 to all pensioners and long-term allowees over 60.

In 1992, women were chairs of six of the eight **Consumer Forums for the Aged.**

Standards have been developed to ensure quality of care and quality of life for residents of **nursing homes and hostels**. User rights initiatives are being put into place so that women receiving care in the community or who are carers enjoy the same freedoms and rights as others in the community.

Between 1985 and 1992, expenditure on the **Home and Community Care Program** almost doubled in real terms. Some 72 per cent of clients are women.

'Older women want to be healthy, to be respected, to contribute and to enjoy a comfortable life.'

The majority of older Australians are women.

Today the average life expectancy of a women in Australia is 80 years. Our increased life expectancy is a great achievement and a great bonus for society.

Older women are often the unpaid carers of grandchildren, husbands and other relatives. We are the heart of the voluntary workforce. And our ongoing participation in all areas of Australian life should be better recognised. We want to contribute, and to have our contribution valued.

Older women know that ageing should be a fulfilling time of life.

We want to be respected for our age, experience and wisdom as older men and women in some cultures have always been, and we want to be portrayed in all our strength and diversity.

We want to live independently and with dignity.

We want enough money to live comfortably and to be able to make choices about our lifestyles. As we get older, we want to stay in our own homes for as long as possible, and know that from time to time we will need assistance to do so. We need programs that will meet our health needs and let us stay fit

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Many women who provide care for an older relative or spouse receive **income support** under Social Security programs.

and active, as well as medical treatments and research which recognise our special health needs. And if we need care, we want to keep the same rights and freedoms as everyone else in the community, including the right to make decisions about our care and about the quality of our lives.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Promote the portrayal of older women in a positive manner, to project their positive contribution to the community, and encourage a much greater involvement of older women in decision making.
- Continue to promote opportunities and services that ensure the well-being of all older women, including health promotion activities, and sport and recreational activities appropriate to their age and ability.
- Maintain adequate income security and promote access to a range of housing options for older women and their carers.
- Continue to publicise the availability of different services so that older women will be able to make informed and rational choices about such care services.
- Maintain an appropriate provision of community and home-based care services for older women to assist them to stay in their homes, and for older women who are carers, in particular addressing the needs of those at risk of premature or inappropriate institutionalisation.
- Further develop multilingual information materials and information strategies for services relevant to older women from a non-English speaking background.
- Develop suitable mechanisms to meet the needs of different cultural groups and those with other special needs, in promoting health and providing services for a variety of needs.
- Through the implementation of ILO Convention No. 156, work towards a concept of family that encompasses the care of aged relatives in the balancing of work and family responsibilities.
- Continue to take other appropriate measures (such as the use of advertising, interpreters, bilingual workers etc.) so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those from a non-English speaking background, women in non-metropolitan areas and women with a disability gain equitable access to services.

- Continue to promote the involvement of older women in government policy making through the Consumer Forums for the Aged and other consultative arrangements.

- Continue to promote user rights initiatives to ensure that older women in residential care and those receiving community services enjoy the same fundamental freedoms as others in the community. These rights include full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy and the right to make decisions about their care and the quality of their lives.

- Develop strategies which encourage older women from non-English speaking background to access and feel comfortable with mainstream services.

Progress So Far

Today the number of older Australians is growing rapidly. In June 1991, 1.9 million of Australia's 17.3 million population were aged 65 and over. Looking ahead to the next decade, the population aged 65 and over will grow by 22 per cent to reach just on 2.4 million by 2001.

This increase is in part caused by improvements in life expectancy — in 1990 a woman aged 65 years could expect to live for a further 19 years. The 80-years-and-over age group has more than doubled over the last 30 years. Women far outnumber men in Australia's ageing population, and women make up some 70 per cent of those over 85.

In 1982, Australia signed the United Nations International Plan of Action on Ageing and since then there have been major developments in many areas of Government policy affecting older Australians. Major reviews have been undertaken and significant reforms in retirement incomes and aged care set in place to enhance quality of life and ensure choices that would contribute to the well-being of older people.

Over the past ten years, the Government's programs for older Australians have encompassed the five principles of the Plan of Action on Ageing: Independence, Participation, Care, Self-fulfilment and Dignity.

Independence

The Age Pension is the corner stone of economic independence for older Australians, particularly for women. The provision of adequate income in retirement is a central objective of Australia's social security policy, and the Federal Government is committed to a means tested, indexed pension rate of above 25 per cent of total average weekly earnings.

To meet the challenge of maintaining retirement incomes as the number of older people increases, the Government undertook a major Social Security Review in 1986 and significant reforms, including significant taxation changes were made. More

recently, the Superannuation Guarantee Charge was introduced in 1992 to extend job related pensions .

Housing plays a major part in securing economic, social and personal independence for older women. Past Government policies emphasising home ownership have benefited the present generation of older Australians — some 65 per cent of older women are home owners. Many older women who are not home owners benefit from public housing assistance by way of direct housing provision or rent assistance. In 1988, women aged 60 and over accounted for about 10 per cent of all households in public housing. Some are long-term tenants, others are living in public housing provided specifically for older people. A high proportion of older women in private rental receive assistance through Rent Assistance which is paid as a supplement to the Age Pension.

Participation

The Commonwealth Office for the Aged was established in 1986 to co-ordinate consultation with key consumer organisations. Consumer Forums for the Aged have been set up in each State and Territory specifically to advise the Minister on matters of concern to older people. Membership is drawn from a wide range of older people's groups; women form the majority of members, and six of the eight State-Territory chairs. Over the last decade, several State Governments have also established special units on ageing.

Older women also participate widely in voluntary organisations. Among the groups to receive support from the Government's Community Organisations Support Program are the Australian Council on the Ageing, the Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation, the Alzheimer's Association and the recently formed Carers' Association of Australia. Governments have also drawn on the expertise and enthusiasm of groups such as the Older Women's Network in community activities.

Care

The Government is well advanced in the implementation of its Aged Care Reform Strategy. The strategy is being implemented over a decade from 1985 to 1995, and is focused on providing support services within the home so that older people can remain as independent as possible for as long as possible. Women are major beneficiaries under this Strategy as recipients of care, as carers, and as staff employed in care services. A Mid-Term Review of the Reform Strategy was undertaken in 1990-91.

The goals of the Aged Care Reform Strategy are to provide older people with equitable access to the most appropriate forms of care on the basis of individually assessed needs. This involves changes in the balance of care between residential and community care, and within residential care, between nursing homes and hostels. (Nursing homes provide 24-hour skilled nursing care; hostels provide personal care and social support. Measures have also been put in place to ensure that the cost of care is not prohibitive.

The range of home and community care services has expanded. The core services of home help, meals services and domiciliary nursing have been supplemented by additional respite care in day centres and homes, personal care, transport services, home maintenance and modification, information, training and paramedical services. All aged care programs recognise the special needs of different groups in the community. Between 1984-85 and 1991-92, expenditure on the joint Commonwealth-State Home and Community Care (HACC) program increased by about 242 per cent. Seventy-two per cent of HACC clients are women.

The HACC client population includes carers of frail older people and people with disabilities. Carers are recognised as clients in their own right and services are provided to support them directly. Older women themselves are in the prime group of carers, both for aged spouses and for aged parents. In the 1992-93 Budget, the Government announced a carers package which included expanded provision of respite care, a carers information kit, and measures to promote community awareness of carers and an increase in the Domiciliary Nursing Care Benefit. Commonwealth funding was provided for the first National Carers week which was held in September 1992.

Special assistance is given to people with dementia and their carers. The Government has initiated a National Action Plan for Dementia Care costing $31 million over five years to consolidate many initiatives in dementia care that have been taken under the Aged Care Reform Strategy.

Self-fulfilment

Educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational opportunities for older people have been the focus of two recent reports of Committees of the House of Representatives. The Reports affirmed that much has been achieved. Reforms in aged care and income security were seen to provide a framework for further initiatives for older people in employment and retraining, recreation and health promotion.

Independence and well-being are also promoted through the National Better Health Program. Older people are the key target group for over 50 national and State projects which cover such areas as community development, exercise and recreation and network building activities. The Office for the Aged has initiated an Ageing and Well-Being Strategy in consultation with Consumer Forums and co-ordinates country-wide activities to mark the United Nations International Day for the Elderly.

Dignity

Government policy and programs aim to uphold the dignity of the individual. The focus of policies and programs has shifted from service providers to the individual user of the services. This shift has come about through active participation of older people in policy development, and through recognition of their rights as consumers of the services provided by the Government.

The consumer focus is evident in publications that enhance the role of older people in the community and promote successful ageing rather than negative stereotypes. Concerted strategies have been pursued to protect the dignity of those older Australians requiring care to ensure that they enjoy the same fundamental freedoms as others in the community. Their needs have been given priority attention in the user rights strategies and outcome standards that have become a feature of aged care programs in recent years. The Charter of Residents Rights and Responsibilities has been introduced in nursing homes and hostels nationally. Community Visitors Schemes have been implemented to improve the quality of life for residents who do not have regular contact with the community.

For older people living in the community, the main area in which they seek to address perceived infringements of their dignity is through combating discrimination on the basis of age. Age discrimination legislation is proceeding at both State and Commonwealth levels. At the Commonwealth level, an Age Discrimination Task Force established by the Attorney General, will release a discussion paper on the need for age discrimination legislation early in 1993.

Photo: Ruth Maddison

The Box Hill Over 90s Club. 'We see ourselves as role models for people in their 80s.'

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Women with Disabilities 19

Achievements We Share

The **Disability Reform Package (DRP),** which was introduced in 1991, aims to improve the participation of people with a disability in employment and the community.

In 1992, the Commonwealth **Disability Discrimination Act** was passed, making it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability.

In 1991-92, some **1225 places in employment services were created** to assist people with disabilities enter open employment.

In 1990-91 the Government announced an additional **2000 additional respite care places,** 300 accommodation support places, and 200 places under the Attendant Care Scheme to be established in 1993-94.

The Commonwealth-State **Disability Agreement** was implemented in 1992 in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT

'We want to live as independently as we can and to be accepted for who we are.'

Women with disabilities want to be able to make choices, to take up opportunities and live as independently as we can.

Women with disabilities want to feel safe and be free from exploitation such as low-paid work, sexual abuse and be free from discrimination. We want respect and acceptance for our contribution to society. We want to have relationships, care for children, and participate fully in the life of the community.

Women with disabilities want real jobs and want to be recognised and assisted with the unpaid work we do in the home. We need access to information if we are to make informed choices about the type of employment, education or training we wish to do. We also need access to transport, to equipment, to new technology as well as to work-based and home-based personal care to make it possible for us to work or study.

We need housing that is flexible enough to meet our needs, close to services and transport. We may need access to home-based services to let us live how and where we want. We want more choices in our lives.

We want to have opportunities to enjoy sport and recreation. And we want our achievements in sport to be recognised like other athletes'.

Transport needs to be easy to use, easy to get to, easy to find out about and be at a price that is affordable.

We want to run our own lives and to have our needs met.

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Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Ensure the implementation of the Commonwealth's Disability Discrimination Legislation.
- Continue to build on the Disability Reform Package initiatives, including identifying measures which target the specific income support and labour market needs of women with a disability.
- Examine the reasons why the workforce participation rate of women with a disability is lower than that of men and develop strategies to address barriers.
- Continue to campaign to raise the awareness of private sector employers about the capabilities and potential of people with disabilities.
- Actively encourage and monitor the employment of women with disabilities in the Commonwealth public sector.
- Encourage co-operative planning between the Commonwealth and State Governments to ensure that the needs of women with a disability are addressed.
- Encourage the participation of women in planning services and provide access to information about individual and consumer rights and available services in a format which is accessible to all women with disabilities (e.g., on tape, in Braille or plain English or in community languages).
- Actively encourage staff in Government agencies to have disability awareness training and to become knowledgeable about the range of employment, training and affirmative action initiatives available to assist women with disabilities.
- In co-operation with the State and Territory Governments, continue to promote occupational health and safety practices to prevent disability and minimise aggravation of existing disabilities..
- In co-operation with the State and Territory Governments, continue to promote sport and recreation opportunities for women with disabilities.
- Encourage research into aids and appliances generally, and in particular to those which assist in dealing with incontinence and menstruation.
- Monitor disability and other community support programs for dealing with incontinence to ensure that women have equal access and to ensure that programs are appropriate to women's needs.

- Examine ways of ensuring women receive adequate compensation under any statutory compensation schemes such as workers' compensation and traffic accident schemes.
- Continue the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service's campaign to increase the participation of women with disabilities in its programs.
- Support improved access to assertiveness training, including access to domestic violence and sexual abuse counselling.
- In co-operation with States and Territories, monitor the effect of the common law and any statutory changes to torts law on women plaintiffs and women carers, and ensure women are not disadvantaged.
- Seek to improve the image in the community of women with a disability through promotional campaigns and affirmative action strategies.
- Encourage parent advocacy groups, so that parents of children with a disability can have access to opportunities to discuss fears and concerns in a supportive environment of peers.

Progress So Far

As recently as ten years ago, a person with a disability had little choice in where they could live or work. Institutional care and jobs in sheltered workshops may have been available to some and, no matter what their age, many with severe physical disabilities lived in geriatric nursing homes. But most people lived at home with their families and received little community support or recognition.

Today both attitudes and practices have changed. People's human rights are recognised under the International Convenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Australia has a Disability Services Act which spells out the needs of people with disabilities. Expectations have also changed and women with disabilities are asserting their right to live the same life as the rest of the community.

The Commonwealth Government as part of its social justice strategy has developed a broad framework of policy change to help in giving more choices to people with a disability. The reforms tackle the disadvantages faced by people with disabilities and their carers and will assist them to reach their full potential.

In September 1983, the Government initiated the Handicapped Programs Review. This looked at all Commonwealth Government Programs which deliver special services for people with a disability. It made recommendations covering 52 areas, but the main benefit from the Review was to set up new legislation, the *Disability Services Act 1986*.

The Disability Services Act was a first step in addressing the long-standing barriers faced by Australians with disabilities. The basic aims of the Act are to provide people

with a disability with more opportunities for developing their capabilities and independence and for greater participation in the community.

In 1988-89, Disability Services Advisory Committees were established in each State and Territory. In 1990 the Disability Advisory Council of Australia was established to advise the Government how Government policy would affect people with a disability and their families.

In 1991, in an effort to improve the participation of people with a disability in employment and the community, the Government introduced the Disability Reform Package. This package made changes in income support, housing and related programs and was designed to address disadvantages in getting work. The package introduced an active system of payment and support for people with a disability and linked disability support pension recipients with suitable vocational training, rehabilitation and employment placement services. The reforms also provided adequate forms of assistance for those unable to compete in the open labour market while at the same time providing opportunities for employment, either on a full or part-time basis. There have also been major initiatives in the area of consumer rights, in particular, assisting 'traditional sheltered' employment services increase the competence and self reliance of their users and to encourage greater physical and social participation in the community.

The Government announced further assistance to build on measures in the Package in 1992. The package included a further increase in mobility allowance and a scheme to subsidise the cost of continence items for disability support pensioners and mobility allowees. In addition, a Transport Advisory Committee will examine ways of improving the accessibility of transport for people with disabilities.

In the past providing services for people with disabilities involved complex Commonwealth-State administrative arrangements. Negotiation of the Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement has removed much of the overlap and gaps in service provision. Under the Agreement, States and Territories made a commitment to pass legislation which complements the Commonwealth Disability Services Act.

Women with disabilities are among the target groups of the National Women's Health Program. Projects to provide services for women with disabilities which have been funded under the Program include women's health centres and sexual assault programs.

Women with disabilities and their carers also benefit from the Government Home and Community Care Program (HACC). In 1992-93 it is anticipated that 19 per cent of the HACC budget will be directed towards people with a disability and their carers. Approximately 72 per cent of all HACC clients are women.

In October 1992 Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Legislation was passed. The legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a disability in much the same way as existing anti-discrimination legislation relating to race and sex. This is

a major part of the Government's overall social justice agenda for people with a disability.

The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) provides direct vocational and social rehabilitation services to people of working age with disabilities. The CRS seeks to make sure that women with disabilities have fair access to their programs. In 1991-92 about 8900 women, representing 34.5 per cent of the total number of clients, were provided with a rehabilitation program.

A Survey of Disabled and Aged Persons will be conducted in 1993. This will provide a basis for an assessment of the circumstances and needs of women who are disabled, aged or carers of disabled and aged persons.

Kathy Duncan, radio journalist.

Photo courtesy of the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services.

Photo: John Butcher

International Netball
1990 Johnson and
Johnson Cup
Australia versus England
The Glasshouse,
Melbourne
17 June 1990

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Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture 20

Achievements We Share

In 1992, some 370 000 women and girls were registered participants in **netball — the fourth largest sport in Australia.**

Australian women have won **11 out of the 14 Olympic Gold medals** won in track and field events since 1948.

Between 1948 and 1992 women have won **26 of the 64 gold medals** won by Australians at the Olympic Games, despite being eligible to compete in only 23 per cent of the total number of events, and despite representing only 21 per cent of the total participants in Australian teams.

In 1991, the **Prime Ministerial Women and Sport Awards** were launched.

In 1992, women won **five major awards** at the AFI Awards, including Best Production (Shared), Best Editing, and the Bryon Kennedy Award for Excellence in Film Making (Shared). There are 21 awards in total.

'Women want the time to be able to read, to go to the movies or theatre of our choice, and to keep fit through sport or exercise.'

Access to recreation, sport and the arts is as basic as the right to work. However, competing demands of work and family leave most women with little time for themselves. And for women with young children, recreational activities are often the only time they leave the house apart from the domestic routine involving such tasks as shopping.

Australian women must have equal opportunity to produce, publish, perform, promote and sell their creative work. Women want their work to be celebrated in its own right. Museums and libraries should reflect the true scope of our contributions to Australian history.

Women also want to participate in the planning, management and development of sporting and cultural policy and to be equally represented on relevant boards and committees.

We need to become more aware of how important leisure activities are for women. We should pay particular attention to the special recreational needs of older women and girls, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and disabled or isolated women.

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In 1991, Joceyln Moorehouse's debut film, *Proof*, won five **AFI awards, including Qantas Best Director and Cinesure Best Screenplay.**

Women want access to sport, recreation, and cultural activities of their choice, and resources to support them.

We want opportunities to reach elite level in sport, and we want recognition for our achievements, past and present. We want access to sponsorship and fair media coverage to provide role models of fit, capable women for our daughters.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Continue to develop public awareness of the contributions of women to Australia's cultural, artistic, recreational and sporting life.
- Establish strategies to ensure that cultural and physical activities can be enjoyed by all women, including women with special needs.
- Encourage the employment of women and women from special needs groups in the recreational, sporting and cultural sectors.
- Provide professional development opportunities and develop career paths for women in the sports and arts industries and in related fields.
- Establish consultation mechanisms between all sectors responsible for the arts, culture, education, environment, health, community services, recreation and the status of women to involve women in policy development.
- Monitor and review Government policies, practices and programs to ensure equitable distribution of funding and program support for women in sport and women in the arts.
- Advocate affirmative action policies and practices for women by arts and sporting organisations.
- Promote the development and implementation of gender equity action plans by sporting and arts organisations as part of their overall development plans. Monitor and evaluate the allocation and use of funding resources by government, community and local sporting and arts organisations in terms of their support for women's and girls programs.

- Advocate for an increased proportion of funding for recreation, arts, sport and cultural activities for women with special needs.
- Work co-operatively with State and Territory Governments to increase the participation and status of women in sport and recreation, through the implementation of the 'Australian Women in Sport and Recreation Strategy'.
- Monitor and research media coverage of women's sport and develop means to improve the quantity and quality of women's sports coverage.
- Encourage the provision of child care facilities at or near sporting and recreational venues and the establishment of facilities that cater for women in sport.
- Encourage providers of all facilities to make them available to women.
- Support research into the policies and practices of arts and related cultural organisations regarding the production, promotion, performance, exhibition, collection and the sale of women's art.
- Support development of collections in national collecting institutions depicting the role of women in Australia's historical, cultural, employment, sporting, recreational and other activities and to address women's issues in research, collections, exhibitions and public programs and published materials.

Progress So Far

Sport and Recreation

Sport plays an important role in Australia's national life. For many years our national identity and international reputation largely came from the prowess of our Olympians, cricketers and tennis stars. But it is an area in which women, despite their outstanding achievements, have traditionally received little recognition and have suffered discrimination in opportunity and status.

As a measure to advance women's sport, in 1987 a Women's Sport Promotion Unit, now called the Women and Sport Unit (WASU), was created within the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). The Unit has initiated a variety of special programs to increase opportunities for women and girls in all aspects of sport and has produced a variety of educational and promotional material to raise public awareness. The *Active* newsletter provides information on women and sport issues and is widely disseminated. In co-operation with the States, the WASU has established the Register of Sportswomen to promote role models for school and community groups and initiated a mass media campaign aimed at adolescent girls. Opportunities were created for women in sport to undertake professional development in media skills, marketing, administration and coaching; and international conferences were held on women and sport. The Unit continues to work closely with the States and Territories to develop initiatives to promote women in sport.

In 1988, the ASC initiated Aussie Sport, a program aimed at children in the 9 to 12-year age group and which promotes the concept of sport for all children in schools. Particular attention is given in the program to breaking down sex barriers in children's sport. In 1990 Aussie Sport was extended into the 13 to 18-year age group.

In the same year, the National Physical Activity and Lifestyle Strategy was developed, identifying women as a group for special attention in the development of policies and programs.

In 1991, the Prime Ministerial Women and Sport Awards were also launched to acknowledge achievements in media coverage, school programs and support for women with special needs. The ABC's national program, *Goal Attack*, was awarded the Prime Minister's National Gold Award for its coverage of the Mobil Superleague Netball for the 1991 season. The ASC has also begun producing 'highlight packages' from selected women's events which are provided free of charge to television stations for use in news and sports magazine shows.

In 1991, the Active Girls Campaign was launched by WASU. This will be a three-year media and educational campaign aimed at encouraging girls and women to participate and enjoy sport and physical activity, as well as educating and informing the community about the benefits of sport for women and girls. *An Active Girl's Diary* and classroom activity sheets have been produced in 1992.

In 1992, the ASC's guidelines *Toward Equity in Sport: a Practical Approach for Sporting Organisations* were launched to develop and implement strategies within national sporting organisations to improve access and equity for women and girls. The ASC will continue to develop and implement agreements with national sporting organisations which specify as a criterion for funding the need to monitor participation by women and to implement gender equity plans.

In 1991, an Elite Women's Advisory Group was formed within the Australian Institute of Sport. The Institute has initiated a scholarship program for women coaches to remedy the gender imbalance among Australian elite coaches.

As part of its policy to promote recreational activities for all Australians, the Government released in 1989 *You Can Beat the Country Blues*, a recreation resource booklet for women in rural areas. The book continues to be in high demand, with nearly 4000 copies distributed in 1992. In 1992, *Recreation in Nursing Homes, Hostels and Day Care Centres — Ideas for Recreation and Leisure Activities* was released, containing details of new or innovative recreation programs which had been successfully introduced into nursing homes in each State and Territory. Women make up the majority of nursing home residents.

Arts and Culture

Women have traditionally been active in all the arts, but their contribution to Australia's artistic and cultural heritage has been largely unrecognised. The Government actively encourages initiatives which acknowledge the achievements of women

in the past and which remove obstacles hindering women making their contribution to cultural life.

To ensure the increasingly equitable representation of women in cultural life, the Government monitors their appointment to the many Boards and Councils of the federal cultural portfolio.

Australia's museums and collecting organisations continue to collect, document and exhibit the contribution of women to Australian society. The National Museum of Australia has embarked on a program to ensure the national historical collection adequately reflects the lives and work of women in Australia, and to document groups of women who have previously been neglected by historical researchers. A focus on the activities of women is a feature of the collecting program of the Museum's Gallery of Aboriginal Australia.

Women have played an important part in the Australian film industry from its earliest days. The National Film and Sound Archive acquires, preserves, and presents material relating to women as a significant collection priority. The Archive conducts specialist research on the role of a number of women prominent in the formative years of Australia's recorded film and sound history. It is also producing a public education kit on 'Women in Sport and Physical Activities in Australian Society, 1896 - 1956'. The Australian National Gallery also develops exhibitions featuring work by women artists, and an increasing number of such exhibitions are travelling throughout Australia. In 1991-92, these included Being and Nothingness: Bea Maddock Work for Three Decades and Fiona Hall and the Mad Hatters. In 1991-92 the National Library of Australia's acquisitions included collections of personal and literary papers of prominent women including Drusilla Modjeska, Marion Halligan, Christina Stead, Robyn Archer, diplomat Ruth Dobson and parliamentarian Dame Dorothy Tangney. Oral history interviews included Susan Ryan, Tamara Fraser, Dame Beryl Beaurepaire and Edna Ryan. In the area of social history, numerous interviews with women have been recorded in documenting the history of Galog (NSW) and the Snowy Mountains Project.

The Australian Film Commission's Women's Program provides financial assistance to promote the participation of women in the film and television industry. The Australian Film Television and Radio School's Training Fund for Women provides training and career advice to women students and industry professionals, and supports women's organisations by running courses in association with them.

In 1984 the Australia Council, recognising that women in the arts were being disadvantaged, published the report *Women in the Arts - A Strategy for Action*. The report included a series of proposals to advance the status of women in its fields of interest which led to important affirmative action initiatives including the establishment of a Women and the Arts Committee. Since 1985 women have been provided with greater opportunities to work in the arts and to access the arts as participants and consumers.

A 1989 study by the Australia Council showed that women predominated among craftspeople, dancers and community artists, whereas the majority of musicians and composers were male. While overt discrimination against women artists is rare, there is evidence of more subtle disadvantage. For example, while women artists work as hard as their male counterparts, their incomes are significantly lower. There is some evidence that while women are receiving Government assistance at a level equivalent to their male counterparts, they are less likely to have their work performed, exhibited, published or purchased. In 1992 the Australia Council conducted research on women and the arts to review policies and practices across arts organisations in commissioning, exhibiting, publishing and performing work by female artists.

Photo courtesy of the Australia Council.

Robyn Archer
in *Le Chat Noir,*
19 to 26 May 1991.

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Women and the Environment 21

Achievements We Share

The Government acted to save the **Franklin River** in 1983 following a community campaign in which women played a major role.

Australia played a role in **developing policies** on women and the environment in the lead up to the United Nations 1992 Conference on Environment and Development (the 'Earth Summit' or UNCED) held in Rio De Janeiro.

The Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women released the **Women and the Environment** statement during UNCED, indicating Australia's support for women's involvement in environmental decision making.

The **National Strategy on Environmentally Sustainable Development** was endorsed by Heads of Government in December 1992 and includes a number of actions in relation to women and ESD issues.

'Women care about the environment. We want a healthy environment, locally and globally, for ourselves and our children.'

Women give protection of the environment a high priority. Many women have now come to question whether some decisions being made on the environment are in our best interests and those of our children.

Women look at environmental issues with a long-term view. We tend to look at development not just in economic terms. We take in the whole picture.

Successful development must improve quality of life for our community, without sacrificing the richness and diversity of our environment.

We know that development and jobs are important. In our homes, our cars and our workplaces we rely on things that have been produced using our natural resources.

We want sustainable development so that the environment is protected for future generations. People and the planet need to be protected through caring and careful use of all resources by individuals, industry and governments.

We need to recognise, as Aboriginal people do, that preserving and nurturing our environment is in our best long-term interests.

We need to act locally, nationally and globally. Problems such as damage to the

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Major **advertising and public relations campaigns** specifically targeted at women were conducted in 1992 to encourage waste minimisation and recycling.

ozone layer demonstrate that environmental decisions taken at the local or national level can have world-wide impacts. We know that clean air and clean water are vital and that they don't stop at state boundaries.

The contributions of women are essential to achieve a better balance between the environment and development. Women's views need to be included in environmental decision-making.

We want to be in the big debates, bringing to them our realism, our co-operativeness, our nurturing and long term approach.

Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Support the involvement of women and their organisations in environmental policy processes particularly in relation to ecologically sustainable development.
- Improve representation of women on Government bodies and committees dealing with environmental issues.
- Encourage industry sectors to recognise and incorporate ecologically sustainable development principles into their operational guidelines.
- Encourage incorporation of ecologically sustainable development principles into curriculum guidelines in all levels of education in a way which encompasses the perspectives of women.
- In co-operation with the States and Territories, improve levels of training in environment based occupations with particular attention to reducing barriers to the participation of women.
- Work to reduce labour market barriers to women in industry sectors which rely on natural resources and in which women are presently under-represented.
- Support environmentally sound consumer choices through appropriate pricing and incentive structures and through the Environmental Choice Australia Program.

- Ensure that women are not selectively disadvantaged economically, personally or socially by environmental policies.
- Continue educational activities such as the National Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy and the Environmental Choice Program and ensure that these activities target women.
- Continue to promote and extend initiatives such as the Landcare, Save the Bush and One Billion Trees programs and encourage participation by women and community-based organisations in campaigns of positive action.
- Consider the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, on matters that impact on land and waterways, particularly those of sacred and spiritual significance.
- In developing ecologically sustainable development practices recognise and learn from the knowledge and practices developed over many thousands of years by Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Work with the Commonwealth Environmental Protection Agency and the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other Government agencies to develop better environmental indicators and information, including in relation to the household sector.

Progress So Far

In Australia, surveys indicate that women give the environment a higher priority than men do. Women are also more involved in actively working in conservation and environmental protection.

Overall there are more members of environment organisations in Australia than of political groups. The majority of the members and workers of these organisations are women.

Issues such as the proposed flooding of the Franklin River in the early 1980s (and Lake Pedder before that) stimulated public awareness and interest in environmental issues. Women played a strong role in the campaign to save the Franklin and the Commonwealth Government listened and acted.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have also actively campaigned over the last decade to protect environmental sites of significance.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men have a connection with the environment that is fundamentally important to their identity and is based on a complex spiritual and cultural relationship developed over countless thousands of years.

The Commonwealth Government has clearly recognised this in acting to protect a number of sites of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, such as

Coronation Hill. Of particular significance to women was the Government's move in 1991 to protect an important women's sacred area near Alice Springs which was proposed as a dam site.

While it has demonstrated a willingness to act where necessary to protect the environment, the Federal Government wants to avoid conflict between development and the environment where possible. To achieve this it is working with the States, industry, and community and environmental groups to set up a framework for development that is appropriate and sustainable.

Women have indicated strong support for a strategy for ecologically sustainable development (ESD). Through environmental groups and women's groups such as the National Women's Consultative Council, they have provided input to the development of an ESD Strategy.

In June 1990, the Australian Government set up nine working groups to examine sustainability issues in key industry sectors. The Working Group Chairpersons' final report recommended that statistical coverage given to the household sector be upgraded; education and information activities pay attention to gender issues; and stronger involvement of women in Government decision-making processes be accelerated.

The National ESD Strategy, endorsed by Heads of Government in December 1992, included initiatives and broad policy directions under which governments will progress issues arising from the ESD recommendations.

In the international arena, Australia assisted in developing policies on women and the environment through meetings and papers leading up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the 'Earth Summit', known as UNCED) held at Rio De Janeiro in June 1992. The Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women released a statement entitled 'Women and the Environment' during UNCED, promoting the strong and legitimate concerns of women with environmental issues and Australia's support for involvement of women in environmental decision-making.

Outcomes from UNCED include recommendations for action to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all development activities and environment and development decision-making. Many of these actions focus on removing obstacles faced by women in public life and on improving the provision of services such as education and health to women. In addition, the 'Rio Declaration' recognises women's vital role in environmental management and development.

At UNCED most Governments endorsed the UN's Agenda for Environment and Development for the 21st Century (Agenda 21) and are therefore committed to implementing these important principles for women.

Photo courtesy of Turnbull, Fox, Phillips.

Biologist Dr Caroline Crawford (second from right) leads a group of volunteer conservationists in a pest plant eradication project in the Adelaide Hills.

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International Co-operation 22

Achievements We Share

Australian women participated enthusiastically in **International Women's Year** in 1975 and were strongly represented at the Women's Conferences held in 1975 and 1985.

Australia ratified the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW) in 1983.

In 1992, Australia was elected to the United Nations **Commission on the Status of Women** for the period 1993 to 1996.

Australian experts participated in developing a draft **International Declaration on Violence Against Women** in 1991-92.

Funds for Australian International Development and Aid Bureau's (AIDAB) **Women in Development Fund** were more than doubled in the 1992-93 Budget.

'We need to work with women around the world to achieve our goals.'

In all countries, women are poorer and less powerful than men. Nowhere do we enjoy equal status. These common concerns link women around the world.

Equality for women is not just a luxury to be afforded where possible. We cannot achieve important international goals, such as conservation of our environment, population control, peace and economic development, without addressing the unequal position of women in the world.

Improving the economic position, education, health and security of women is fundamental to achieving a world that is fairer, more prosperous and secure.

Women ask why it is that, although we do a large share of the world's work, we own very little of the world's wealth. We want change. We want the world's wealth spent on improving all people's lives rather than on war and violence. We need better health care, education, housing, clean water and the means to have a decent living.

We need to work through both government and non-government organisations to establish close links with women in other countries, especially other women in our region.

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Action for the Future

The Commonwealth Government has agreed to pursue the following strategies towards achieving our goals.

- Promote the status of women through:
  - Australia's participation in international forums including the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Commonwealth of Nations; and
  - bilateral activities with other countries.
- Support national and international activities in preparation for the UN World Conference on Women to be held in 1995 and the 1994 Preparatory Conference for Asia and the Pacific.
- Work towards outcomes from the 1995 World Conference on Women which provide renewed impetus to strategies for the advancement of women, including a program of action addressing specific obstacles to the advancement of women.
- Support stronger international monitoring and reporting on the status of women, in particular on the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- Raise violations of women's human rights, in relevant international forums, and support international efforts to address violence against women in all its forms including domestic violence and torture.
- Seek to have forthcoming international events such as the 1993 World Human Rights Conference, the UN Summit on Social Development and the International Year of the Family focus on the position of women in society and accurately reflect women's contribution to social and economic progress.
- Continue to seek the advancement of women within the UN Secretariat, including an increase in the number of women in decision making positions in the UN and other multilateral agencies.
- Increase participation by suitably qualified Australian women in international and regional meetings and in international decision making forums.
- In international activities, ensure that the views of indigenous women are included when presenting the perspectives of Australian women and, in particular, ensure that they are properly represented in activities for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People in 1993.
- Support effective input by non-government organisations of women to international and regional forums.

- Continue to promote the effective involvement of women in development assistance programs and ensure that they share equitably in the benefits of such programs.

- More fully integrate women in development policy into the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau's (AIDAB) mainstream programs but continue AIDAB's special Women in Development fund until mainstream sources have taken over its role.

- Reinforce AIDAB's regional focus through support for Southeast Asian and Pacific organisations with effective women in development activities.

- Continue co-operation with efforts to establish an improved international database on women.

Progress So Far

Australia has a long history of involvement in international status of women issues, especially in multilateral forums such as the United Nations and through aid programs.

In 1972, the UN proclaimed the year 1975 as International Women's Year. The focal point of the international celebration was the World Conference held in Mexico City in June-July 1975. After taking note of the report of the World Conference, the UN decided in December 1975 to proclaim the period 1976-1985 United Nations Decade for Women with the themes of Equality, Development and Peace.

A World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 1985. It adopted the landmark document, *Forward Looking Strategies*, for the advancement of women for the period up to the year 2000.

In Australia, the objectives of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies are incorporated in the New National Agenda for Women, which represents the Government's blueprint for improving the status of women to the year 2000.

The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace to the Year 2000 will be held in Beijing, China in 1995. The Conference is part of a long-term strategy to improve the status of women worldwide.

The United Nations

The UN bodies primarily concerned with promoting the status of women are:

- the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which recommends to the UN Economic and Social Council (and through it to the General Assembly) measures to promote women's rights;

- the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women which is the monitoring body for the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); and
- the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

The CSW concentrates on improving women's status and promoting equal rights for men and women. Countries are elected to CSW for limited terms.

Australia has been a member for 17 of CSW's 46 years of existence and has been elected for a further four-year term from 1993 to 1996. As a CSW member, Australia will play a significant role in preparing for the 1995 Women's World Conference.

A current area of CSW activity of particular interest is the proposal to develop a United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. A draft Declaration emerged from an Expert Group meeting held by the UN in Vienna in November 1991 and was developed further at an intersessional meeting of the Working Group of CSW which met from 31 August to 4 September 1992. Australia made a major contribution to both meetings. A draft declaration will be now considered by the 1993 session of the CSW.

CEDAW now has some 113 country signatories, an increase of about 50 per cent since 1988. Australia has been a leading advocate of successful efforts to have the UN provide more support to the work of the expert Committee which monitors implementation of the Convention. We have also encouraged wider accession to CEDAW, for example by South Pacific countries.

Australia reports regularly to the CEDAW committee on the status of women. Our latest report was submitted in June 1992.

Australia's international involvement has brought domestic benefits for the status of women in Australia. For example, the sex discrimination legislation was enacted following Australia's ratification of CEDAW in 1983. The National Agenda for Women was developed in response to the UN Decade for Women (1975-85).

In 1992, Justice Elizabeth Evatt, President of the Australian Law Reform Commission and a former Chief Justice of the Family Court, finished her second term as a member (and from 1989-90, as the Chairperson) of the Committee. She is acknowledged internationally as one of the most influential contributors to CEDAW's work and has recently been elected to the UN Human Rights Committee, where, as an independent expert, she will again bring Australia's experience and perspectives to bear in UN consideration of gender discrimination problems.

Australia works actively within the United Nations system, at the international and regional level, to improve the status of women. This includes a significant concentration on improving the position of women within the UN system itself, particularly at senior levels.

Other International Activities

As a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, Australia participates in meetings of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs. The Australian Government is working to ensure that the Commonwealth Secretariat places an appropriate emphasis on issues affecting women.

Australia is also an active member of the Women in Development Expert Group of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Australia is also active in the OECD Working Party on the Role of Women in the Economy.

The Forward Looking Strategies which emerged from the UN Decade of Women, urge that wherever development aid is given, the needs and participation of women should be taken into account.

The recognition of women's needs and their active participation in the development process underpin the Women in Development (WID) policy adopted in 1984 by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB). Through its foreign aid programs Australia supports regional and bilateral projects and projects by non-government organisations, which can have a direct effect on women in developing countries. AIDAB's WID Fund provides funding for innovative projects directly benefiting women and AIDAB is seeking more fully to integrate women in development principles into all its programs.

To strengthen the Government's efforts towards sustainable development and the advancement of women, a revised Women in Development Policy has been adopted. This policy places particular emphasis on giving women a full and equal place in all aspects of the development co-operation program, including as decision-makers, on measures to improve the status of women, and on improved accountability for the implementation of the policy.

Australian Senator Pat Giles and other members of World Women Parliamentarians for Peace, a group of almost 600 women parliamentarians from about 60 countries working together towards peace.

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Implementing the National Agenda 23

For this National Agenda to have value for women in Australia, it needs to be implemented effectively. Women in the community should see and feel the difference in their lives.

What Processes are Used to Implement the National Agenda?

The Federal Budget Process

The allocation of funds in the annual Federal Budget is a key process in the implementation of the National Agenda. All Departments take responsibility for implementing strategies in the National Agenda relevant to their portfolio. The Office of the Status of Women (OSW) in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet plays a pivotal role in advising the Prime Minister, the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women and the Cabinet on priorities and the effects of proposed initiatives and measures on women. During the Budget process, OSW works closely with the Women's Units and Women's Desk Officers in Departments. The *Women's Budget Statement* describes measures taken in all Departments.

Law Reform

If change for women requires a new Act of Parliament or amendments to an existing Act then the Government must approve the new legislation. A bill is then put before both Houses of Parliament for debate and is declared law once it has passed through the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Sex Discrimination Act and the Affirmative Action Act were both enacted in this way. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner in the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission has the task of implementing the Sex Discrimination Act. The Affirmative Action Agency was established to implement the Affirmative Action Act.

The pressure for law reform comes from a wide range of sources. These include:

- women in the community,
- women's organisations,
- parliamentary inquiries, such as the recent Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Australian Women by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs,

- reports from the Australian Law Reform Commission, and
- reports from taskforces and other bodies set up by Government to recommend reforms on matters of concern.

Many issues of concern to women are covered by State and Territory laws. These are often discussed at Commonwealth-State Ministerial Councils.

The Implementation of Programs

A lot of emphasis is placed on ensuring that new programs (e.g. traineeships) are designed so that they are effective in meeting women's needs. The main responsibility for this rests with the section of the department actually implementing the program. Women's units in departments (as discussed later) play a key role in ensuring that a program is promoted and implemented so that women know about programs, have access to them and receive a fair share of them.

Commonwealth-State Ministerial Councils

Many programs (e.g., women's refuges) are jointly funded through Commonwealth-State Government agreements. Ministerial Councils, comprising Commonwealth and State Ministers, meet once or twice a year to discuss developments in these programs and to consider ways of improving them.

Ministerial Councils consider a range of issues of importance to women. Some have established special committees to advise them. These include:

- the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) sub-committee on Women and Health;
- the Women's Housing Issues Working Party which advises the Housing Ministers Conference;
- the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee has established a Women's Standing Committee to advise and assist it in enhancing women's access to, and participation in, vocational education, employment and training; and
- the Departments of Labour Advisory Committee (DOLAC) has a working party on women and the labour force which considers a wide range of industrial relations and labour issues for women, including ILO Convention No. 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities. It also has responsibility for some elements of the Australian Women's Employment Strategy.

In March 1990, the then Prime Minister announced the establishment of the Commonwealth-State Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women. The Conference has considered a wide range of issues including workers with family responsibilities;

women and training reform; women and microeconomic reform and violence against women. This Conference is supported by a standing committee of women's advisers made up of the heads of the central women's units at Commonwealth and State level.

The National Strategy on Violence Against Women relies extensively on the Ministerial Council structure for its implementation.

The Social Justice and Access and Equity Strategies

Both these strategies have objectives which are complementary to the National Agenda for Women (e.g., the Youth Social Justice Strategy comprised initiatives which benefited young women).

The Government's Social Justice Strategy provides a framework for ensuring that all Australians, including the least well-off, can have productive and fulfilling lives and are able to exercise their rights and determine the shape of their lives.

The Government's Access and Equity Strategy requires all services and programs to be designed and delivered to reach all intended clients regardless of background.

Government Machinery for Women

Australia has one of the most advanced systems in the world for ensuring that women's interests and concerns are taken into account in all aspects of Government policy-making. The key component of this system is the network of women's units in both Commonwealth and State Government departments. The Office of the Status of Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is the pivotal point in this machinery. It has both formal and informal processes for working with women's units and desk officers in other Federal Government departments and agencies, women in the community and State Government women's units.

Several major strategies for women have been developed through this Government machinery. These include:

- National Women's Health Policy and Program;
- National Non-English Speaking Background Women's Health Strategy;
- Australian Women's Employment Strategy;
- National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools;
- Higher Education Equity Plan;
- National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE;
- The Women's Issues Plan (Department of Immigration Local Government and Ethnic Affairs);
- Equal Pay Policy Statement; and
- National Strategy on Violence Against Women.

The National Agenda For Women Grants Program

Projects for women and some national women's organisations are funded through this annual grants program which is managed by the Office of the Status of Women. Each year $500 000 is distributed to organisations which are conducting projects or working generally towards fulfilling the objectives of the National Agenda for Women.

How Does the Government Evaluate, Monitor and Report Progress for Women?

Evaluation

Evaluation is critical to implementing the National Agenda for Women. Evaluation will monitor the effectiveness of the National Agenda by addressing issues of awareness, training, uptake, coverage and appropriateness. Evaluation will focus on both the equality of opportunities and the equality of outcomes.

Several mechanisms are used to evaluate progress including the following.

The National Agenda for Women Implementation Report

An implementation report is published regularly by OSW and assesses progress on the strategies identified in the National Agenda. It is widely distributed to women in the community.

Gender Equality Indicators

These indicators are prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and are published regularly. They track changes over ten-year periods to evaluate how women are progressing compared with men in a wide range of areas. The indicators include:

- school retention rates to year 12,
- sex ratio of TAFE enrolments,
- sex ratio of apprentices,
- average weekly hours worked by full-time and part-time workers,
- average weekly earnings of full-time employees in main job, and
- percentage of employees with superannuation coverage.

These indicators are used widely within Government in the evaluation of programs.

Portfolio Evaluation Plans

All Departments are required to evaluate their programs over a three- to five-year period. The Department of Finance requires them to prepare a portfolio evaluation plan each year. These plans summarise their portfolio evaluation strategy, including

evaluations with major policy and/or resource implications. Women's access to programs and the effectiveness of programs in meeting their objectives are evaluated in this way, e.g., the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools was reviewed in 1992.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Australian Government makes regular reports, both internationally and nationally, on progress it is making in achieving equal status for women.

These reports are made through a variety of bodies and mechanisms, the most important of which are described below.

Regular Reports to the UN Committee Monitoring Progress on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The Commonwealth Government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1983. Australia is obliged to report every four years to the UN on progress in improving the status of women. Australia's First Report was considered by the CEDAW Committee in 1988. The Second Report was presented by the Prime Minister to Her Excellency Mrs Mervat Tallawy, Chair of the UN Committee, in June 1992.

Photo by Garry Hanson, AUSPIC.

Prime Minister
Paul Keating presents
Australia's second CEDAW
report to
Mrs Mervat Tallawy,
Chairperson of the United
Nations' CEDAW
Committee in June 1992.

Australia's representatives will be questioned on the report by the full CEDAW Committee. This National Agenda for Women and its implementation Reports will be tabled as part of the response. These reports represent full and frank accounts of the degree to which the Convention has been implemented in Australia. They provide comprehensive information and data on programs and legislation to eliminate discrimination of all kinds.

Reports to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on Progress in Implementing Conventions

Australia has ratified several ILO conventions of importance to women e.g., ILO Convention No. 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities, ILO Convention No. 100, Equal Remuneration and ILO Convention No. 111, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation). Australia is required to report regularly to the ILO on measures being implemented under these Conventions.

Australian Bureau of Statistics Collections

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) from regular surveys are provided in gender disaggregated form (i.e., all data are broken down to show the male/female differences).

Recent and forthcoming ABS reports include:

- An Index of Information About Women—A Guide to Statistical Publications,
- A National Social Report on Women, to be released in 1993,
- Time Use Surveys (1987 and 1992),
- A Women's Health Report (1992-93),
- A National Survey of Families Report for release in June 1993, and
- Child Care Survey Report (1992 and 1993).

The Appointment Rate of Women to Decision-Making Positions

In 1991, the Office of the Status of Women designed and implemented a computerised management information system, *Appoint*, to provide the Commonwealth Government and departments with an effective way of measuring progress towards achieving 50 per cent by the year 2000 in the appointment rate to statutory and non-statutory bodies of women, people of non-English speaking background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people with a disability.

Departments are now required to include progress in the appointment rate of women to boards and committees in their annual reports to Parliament.

Glossary of Acronyms

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AEC	Australian Education Council
AFI	Australian Film Institute
AHMAC	Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council
AHMC	Australian Health Ministers' Conference
AIDAB	Australian International Development and Aid Bureau
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIRC	Australian Industrial Relations Commission
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
APS	Australian Public Service
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
ATS	Australian Traineeship Scheme
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AVC	Australian Vocational Certificate
BBC	Building Better Cities Program
BIR	Bureau of Immigration Research
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
CHP	Community Housing Program
CRS	Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service
CSHA	Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CSW	UN Commission on the Status of Women
DAS	Department of Administrative Services
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DILGEA	Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs
DOLAC	Department of Labour Advisory Committee
DRP	Disability Reform Package
DSS	Department of Social Security
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
FAS	Family Allowance Supplement
FBT	Fringe Benefits Tax
HACC	Home and Community Care
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INAC	Interim National Accreditation Council (Child Care)
INSTRAW	UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

IYF	UN International Year of the Family
JET	Jobs, Education and Training Program
MRA	Minimum Rates Adjustment
NASJS	Northern Australia Social Justice Strategy
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
NCVAW	National Committee on Violence Against Women
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NDVEP	National Domestic Violence Education Program
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NH&MRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NISS	National Integrated Settlement Strategy
NOOSR	National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition
NUDP	National Urban Development Program
NWAC	National Women's Advisory Council
NWCC	National Women's Consultative Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIW	Office of Indigenous Women (ATSIC)
OMA	Office of Multicultural Affairs
OSW	Office of the Status of Women, Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet
PM	Prime Minister
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SDA	Sex Discrimination Act
SNAP	Support Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parents
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United National Conference on Environment and Development - Brazil 1992
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women
VEETAC	Vocational Employment, Education and Training Advisory Group
WASU	Women and Sport Unit
WEETAG	Women's Employment, Education and Training Advisory Group
WID	Women in Development
WSU	Women in Sport Unit
YHA	Young Homeless Allowance
YSJS	Youth Social Justice Strategy

Appendix One

Administrative arrangements with some of the following have changed since the March 1993 Election. These will be included in the next edition.

Key Information on Commonwealth Government Departments and Agencies

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission was established to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policies and in designing and implementing Government programs which affect them. It promotes the development of self-management and self-determination among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Office of Indigenous Women is a focal point within the Commission for the provision of opinions and advice on issues which involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Telephone contact numbers

Qld	07	2298277
NSW	02	2861500
Vic	03	6044400
Tas.	002	348055
SA	08	2336700
WA	09	2203211
NT	089	824511
ACT	06	2891222

Administrative Services

The Administrative Services Portfolio comprises the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), and two statutory authorities: the Australian Electoral Commission and the Commonwealth Grants Commission.

DAS is the Australian Government's common service provider to its own and other public agencies. The Department has introduced a policy of not purchasing goods from suppliers who do not comply with the requirements of the *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986*. The policy extend to sub-contractors engaged by suppliers. In effect this means that DAS will not purchase goods or services from Australian employers who breach the provisions of the Act.

The policy is intended to encourage suppliers to recognise the potential benefits to themselves and their businesses of affording equal employment opportunities to women.

Department of Arts, Sport, Environment and Territories

The Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories portfolio is responsible for developing and implementing policies and programs to meet the Government's objectives in sport, recreation, fitness, Antarctica, Australia's external Territories, the arts, film, television, cultural heritage, environment, conservation and meteorology. The programs that have a greater impact on women are those relating to sport, recreation and cultural development.

Telephone contact numbers

Community Information Unit (toll free)	008 803772
Australia Council (toll free)	008 226912

Attorney-General's Department

The Attorney-General's Department is responsible to the Attorney-General, the Minister for Justice, and the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The Department provides legal services to Federal Ministers, departments and authorities and is responsible to the Attorney-General for legislation under his administration.

Telephone contact number

Attorney-General's Department 06 250 6666

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) is responsible for administering the Sex Discrimination Act. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner exercises certain statutory powers of inquiry, conciliation and settlement of sex discrimination complaints on behalf of the Commission.

Telephone contact number

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (toll free)
008 021199

Department of Employment, Education and Training

The portfolio comprises the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) which advises on and gives effect to Government policies for achieving immediate and long-term economic, educational and other social goals, through

programs aimed at improving the effectiveness of Australia's employment, education and training systems. The Department's corporate goals are:

- to increase participation in employment, education and training, and to raise the commitment of individuals, employers, unions, other organisations and governments to this goal;

- to improve the quality and relevance of employment, education and training so that Australians can better adapt to changing economic, industrial and social circumstances;

- to improve equity in access to employment, education and training, and to pursue more equal outcomes for women and disadvantaged groups; and

- to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility of education, training and employment systems in meeting the needs of the community and to assist labour adjustment associated with industrial restructuring aimed at increasing international competitiveness.

In order to address these objectives, the portfolio is organised into six programs:

Program 1 Schools
Program 2 Higher Education
Program 3 Vocational Education and Training
Program 4 Employment
Program 5 Education Income Support
Program 6 Corporate Services, Portfolio Advising and International Participation.

Most DEET programs impact on women and are designed to address the access and equity objectives of the Department. The Department's strategic planning process requires all areas to prepare a specific Gender Access and Equity Plan for 1992-93. The plan requires program managers to report on how access and equity issues are handled in their policy and/or program development and delivery, and on strategies for removing barriers to women.

Associated with DEET are:

- National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET); and

- Women's Education, Employment and Training Advisory Group (WEETAG).

Telephone contact numbers

The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR)
(toll free) 008 020086

AUSTUDY / ABSTUDY (toll free) 008 806963

Other information can be obtained through State Offices

NSW and the ACT	02	2188799
NT	089	829240
Qld	07	2269243
SA	08	3757106
Tas.	002	357135
Vic.	03	6667208
WA	09	4254867

Department of Defence

The Defence portfolio comprises the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Department of Defence.

The latter supports the Government in the development, implementation and evaluation of Defence policy and programs. It provides policy, procurement, scientific, logistic and other support services.

The ADF's primary responsibility is its military function. The ADF also has non-defence functions, including: coastal surveillance, fisheries protection and search and rescue, and natural disaster relief. Defence also provides assistance in counter-terrorism to the governments of foreign countries and to the United Nations in its peacekeeping activities.

Department of Finance

The Finance portfolio includes the Department of Finance, the Retirement Benefits Office, Commonwealth Funds Management Ltd and the Australian National Audit Office.

Telephone contact number

06 263 2195

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides advice and support to the Minister for Foreign Affai and Trade and the Minister for Trade and Overseas Development to assist the Government to maintain a positive security and strategic environment in Australia's gion and to promote Australia's economic well-being; to contribute to enhanced global security and a more just international order; and to provide a framework for the Government's overseas activities and services to Australians.

The portfolio also includes the Australian International Development Assistant Bureau, the agency with primary responsibility for planning and implementing official development assistance programs.

The Department pursues internationally the Government's objectives in the areas of women's rights and the status of women.

Telephone contact number

06 261 9111

Department of Health, Housing and Community Services

The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services aims for integrated program delivery focused on the needs of the individual within the local community. The Department's services are delivered through seven programs and their various sub-programs:

- Health Advancement,
- Health Care Access,
- Aged Care,
- Disability Programs,
- Children's Services,
- Housing and Urban Development,
- Corporate Management.

Also in the portfolio are the Health Insurance Commission, National Food Authority, Australian Hearing Services, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Telephone contact numbers

State and Territory Offices

Disability Services

NSW	02	2258718
SA	08	2376041
NT	089	463409
Vic.	03	6044251
WA	09	4263446
Tas.	002	211501
Qld	07	3602738
ACT	06	2745150

Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service

NSW	02	2258501
SA	08	2476130
NT	089	463489
Vic.	03	6044090
WA	09	4263624
Tas.	002	211410
Qld	07	3602981
ACT	06	2745199

Hearing Services

NSW	02	2674500
SA	08	2376149
NT	089	463493
Vic.	03	6044260
WA	09	3235823
Tas.	002	205580
Qld	07	8649482
ACT	06	2576530

Children's Services

NSW	02	2253662
SA	08	2109698
NT	089	463413
Vic.	03	6044000
WA	09	4263567
Tas.	002	211411
Qld	07	3602555
Nth Qld	007	272218
ACT	06	2745220

Housing and Urban Development

NSW	02	2360011
ACT	06	2745108
NT	089	463454
WA	09	4263444
Qld	07	3602555
SA	08	2376111
Tas.	002	211490
Vic.	03	6048484

Health Programs

NSW	02	225355
ACT	06	2745119
NT	089	463444
WA	09	4263444
Qld	07	3602555
SA	08	2376111
Tas.	002	211411
Vic.	03	6044000

Aged Care

NSW	02	225355
ACT	06	2745119
NT	089	463444
WA	09	4263444
Qld	07	3602555
SA	08	2376111
Tas.	002	211411
Vic.	03	6044000

Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs

The Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) is responsible for the ongoing migration program on a non-discriminatory basis. It addresses the settlement needs of recently arrived migrants by providing English language training, and interpreting and translating services. The special needs of migrant women are taken into account under these programs. Also covered under the DILGEA portfolio are Bureau of Immigration Research and the Immigration Review Tribunal.

NSW	02	2563578
ACT	06	2744539
NT	089	463102
WA	09	2612482
Qld	07	3605015
SA	08	2376652
Tas.	002	204227
Vic.	03	6123341

Department of Industrial Relations

The Department of Industrial Relations advises the Government on and promotes ways that labour and management can contribute to improving Australia's productivity and international competitiveness. It is responsible for implementing Government policies of pay equity for women, and assisting Australians to balance their work and family

responsibilities. Two specialist units, the Equal Pay Unit and the Work and Family Unit have been established within the Department to progress and promote these issues.

In addition, the Department provides the Government with policy advice on industrial relations, and conducts research into these issues. It is also responsible for ensuring that Australia meets its international labour obligation as a member of the International Labour Organisation.

It provides an information and education service for federal awards, and ensures compliance with those awards.

In public sector employment, the Department has a distinctive role: for the Australian Public Service, it is encouraging and facilitating the move to workplace agreements; for Government business enterprises, it is assisting them to progress towards more decentralised wage-fixing arrangements.

Other agencies in the Industrial Relations Portfolio include: the Affirmative Action Agency; the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, known as Worksafe Australia; the Commission for the Safety and Rehabilitation of Commonwealth Employees, known as Comcare; the Remuneration Tribunal; the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal; and the Australian Industrial Registry, the administrative arm of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

Telephone contact numbers

NSW	02	2820801
Vic.	03	6494533
Qld	07	2312555
WA	09	4264300
SA	08	2376280
Tas.	002	351900
NT	089	461600
Equal Pay Unit	06	2437709
Work and Family Unit	06	243 7742

Affirmative Action Agency

The Affirmative Action Agency was established to administer the *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986*. The Act covers all private sector employers with more than 100 employees and higher education institutions.

Relevant employers under the Act are required:

- to develop and implement an affirmative action program; and
- to report on the program, annually, to the Director of Affirmative Action.

Telephone contact number

Affirmative Action Agency 02 9574333

Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce

The Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce has primary responsibility for advising the Government on industry, science and technology. It also delivers programs on behalf of the Government to firms in the Australian manufacturing and services sectors and to the science and technology community.

Telephone contact number

06 276 111

Department of Primary Industries and Energy

The objective of the Department of Primary Industries and Energy is to increase the contribution that the agricultural, minerals, energy, fisheries, and forestry industries make to the well-being of Australians. In pursuing this objective, the Department's corporate goals and philosophy place emphasis on equal opportunity, social justice and access and equity.

Telephone contact number

COUNTRYLINK
(toll free) 008 026222
Week-days 9.00 am to 6.00 pm EST

Shopfront Information Resource Centre
(toll free) 008 020157

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet advises and assists the Prime Minister and the Government in policy formulation and decision making and facilitates the operation of executive government, including its relationship with Parliament. The portfolio includes the Office of National Assessments, the Economic Planning and Advisory Council, the Resources Assessment Commission, the Australian Science and Technology Council, the Public Service Commission, the Office of Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, the Merit Protection and Review Agency, the Office of the Governor-General, and the Commonwealth and Defence Force Ombudsman.

Also located in the Department are the National Child Protection Council, the Commonwealth-State Relations Secretariat, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Office of the Status of Women.

The Office of the Status of Women produces information on issues of interest to women, including violence against women, women and the environment, workers with family responsibilities, the portrayal of women in the media, the Women's Budget Statement, and the National Women's Consultative Council.

OSWomen is a free quarterly newsletter from the Office of the Status of Women which tells of government programs and policies of particular relevance to women. It

also publicises activities and resources women may find useful. Circulation approximately 38,000. For information about deadlines, subscriptions, etc, contact the editor, Karin Geiselhart, on 06 271 5838.

OSW's fax is 06 271 5751.

For copies of the OSW publications order form, or to obtain a particular publication, please contact DAS Distribution,
PO Box 655, Fyshwick ACT 2609. ph 06 280 1536,
fax 06 202 5696

Telephone contact numbers

National Child Protection Council	06	2715285
Office of Multicultural Affairs	06	2715640
Commonwealth-State Relations Secretariat	06	2715298
Office of the Status of Women	06	2715756

Public Service Commission

The Public Service Commission is an independent statutory body with responsibility under the Public Service Act for major elements of human resource management policy in the Australian Public Service (APS). Under Section 22B of the Public Service Act the Commission has responsibility for promoting and monitoring continuing progress in relation to equal employment opportunity in the APS.

Telephone contact number

06 2723977

Department of Social Security

The main objective of Social Security programs is to provide income support for people who are retired, suffer from a permanent disability, are unemployed or sick, have children in their care, or are not in a position to provide for themselves because of special circumstances.

Some 73 per cent of the Department of Social Security's 5 million clients are women. Contact your local Regional Office of Social Security for information.

DSS National Inquiry Number

13 2468

Multilingual Telephone Information Service

008 039009

Department of Transport and Communications

The role of the Department of Transport and Communications is to foster the development of Australia's transport and communications sectors and thus, overall economic growth and development. The Department does this by providing an infrastructure and regulatory framework which promotes efficient, equitable and cost-effective air and surface transport and communications services. It also promotes safety in air, sea and land transport systems.

Telephone contact number

06 2747111

Treasury

The Treasury advises and assists the Treasurer, and through the Treasurer the Government, in the discharge of responsibilities for the broad range of economic — including fiscal and monetary - policies. It is essentially a specialist advisory department whose interest and areas of advisory responsibility range across the whole gamut of economic and financial policy in Australia.

Other agencies within the Treasury portfolio include: the Australian Taxation Office, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Insurance and Superannuation Commission, the Prices Surveillance Authority, the Industry Commission and the Royal Australian Mint.

Telephone contact number

(toll free) 008 02008

Department of Veterans' Affairs

The Veterans' Affairs portfolio is made up of a number of agencies responsible for carrying out Government policy and implementing programs to fulfil Australia's obligations to war veterans and their dependants.

The agencies include, the Repatriation Commission, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Veterans' Children Education Boards, the Veterans' Review Board, the Australian War Memorial and the Office of Australian War Graves.

Contact numbers for the Department of Veterans' Affairs are listed in the Commonwealth Government section of the telephone book white pages in each State and Territory. For callers outside the metropolitan areas of capital cities, toll-free numbers are listed below.

Telephone contact numbers

NSW	008 257251
Vic..	008 113304
Qld	008 113304
SA	008 113304
WA	008 113304
NT	008 888121
Tas.	008 001211
ACT	008 046088

Residents of Northern NSW who are clients of the Brisbane office of the Department should ring (toll free) 008 777634.

Appendix Two

Organisations represented at the National Agenda for Women Renewal Forum, Parliament House, Canberra, 27 May 1992. The Renewal Forum was the main consultative forum held in preparation of this document.

Association of Neighbourhood House & Learning Centres of Victoria

Association of Non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia

Australian Church Women

Australian Council of Churches

Australian Council on the Ageing

Australian Council of Trade Unions

Australian Federation of University Women

Australian Local Government Women's Association

Australian Women's Education Coalition

Australian Youth Policy & Action Coalition

Business & Profession Women's Club of Australia

Catholic Women's League of Australia

Country Women's Association of Australia

Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia

Girl Guides Association of Australia

Maternity Alliance

MediaSwitch

National Association of Community Based Children's Services

National Committee on Violence Against Women

National Council of Jewish Women of Australia

The National Council of Women of Australia

National Family Day Care Council

National Foundation of Australian Women

National Council of Women of Australia Inc

National Women's Consultative Council

National Working Party II on the Portrayal of Women in the Media

Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia

Older Women's Network

Pan Pacific & SE Asia Women's Association

Penguin Club of Australia

Playgroup Council of Australia

The Salvation Army

UNAA Status of Women Network

Union of Australian Women

War Widows Guild of Australia

Women in Science Enquiry Network

Women's Action Alliance (Australia)

Women's Electoral Lobby

Women's Housing Caucus

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Women's Network Disabled

Peoples International

YWCA (Australia)

Zonta International